

January 2015

The Historical Evolution of the German Present Perfect from the Perspective of Complexity Theory and Emergent Grammar

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PURDUE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
Thesis/Dissertation Acceptance

This is to certify that the thesis/dissertation prepared

By Valentina Concu

Entitled

The Historical Evolution of the German Present Perfect from the Perspective of Complexity Theory and Emergent Grammar

For the degree of Master of Arts



Is approved by the final examining committee:

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7/27/2015

Date

THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE GERMAN PRESENT PERFECT
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF COMPLEXITY THEORY AND
EMERGENT GRAMMAR

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty
of
Purdue University
by
Valentina Concu

In Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

August 2015
Purdue University
West Lafayette, Indiana

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ABSTRACT

Concu, Valentina. M.A., Purdue University, August 2015. The Historical Evolution of the Present Perfect from the Perspective of Complexity Theory and Emergent Grammar. Major Professor: John Sundquist.

The purpose of this study is to understand the meaning of the present perfect in Modern German and also, to trace its development in the early stages of German. Therefore, the synchronic analysis, in which I analyze articles from a famous German magazine, is combined with the diachronic study of the present perfect attestations in Old High German and Middle High German. This study is conducted within a Complexity-Theory and Emergent Grammar approach in which languages are viewed as dynamic system that changes over time, and grammar is seen as an epiphenomenon and a result of communicative needs among speakers. This study shows that German speakers use the present perfect with a particular pragmatic function, which started to emerge already in Old High German. This work also highlights the relevance of diachronic research for a deeper understanding of grammar, as well as the importance of a pragmatic approach when addressing grammar in general.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In every language, the use of grammatical tenses is one of the most important parts of every day communication, since it aids in understanding of every written or spoken text. The tense system of a language is, indeed, a vital component of every speech act and “the language itself requires us to use tenses in every sentence and often, more than one time” (Weinrich, 1964, p. 8). In German, the present perfect in particular has drawn the attention of numerous scholars: “wohl über kein anderes deutsches Tempus wurde so viel geschrieben wie über das Perfekt” claims Michael Rödel (2007, p. 57) in his work about the double present perfect.

According to Duden, the present perfect is a “Zeitform, mit der ein verbales Geschehen oder Sein aus der Sicht des bzw. der Sprechenden als vollendet charakterisiert wird; Vorgegenwart; vollendete Gegenwart; Präsensperfekt” (a tense with a verbal event or state, which is already completed from the point of view of the speaker; pre-past; completed past, present perfect).

This construction, which started to be used during the Old High German period, is formed by the combination of the auxiliary verbs *haben* and *sein* and the past participle:

(1) Sie hat ein Buch gelesen

She had a book read

‘She has read a book’

(2) Er ist nach Hause gefahren

He is home gone

‘He has gone home’

The German present perfect is used in numerous contexts, formal or informal, written or spoken, as shown by the two examples below. The first, from the online version of the newspaper *Die Zeit*, and the second is extracted from a blog about healthy cooking tips:

(3) “Das Wort Dekarbonisierung hatten bislang wohl die wenigsten Menschen in ihrem aktiven Wortschatz. Das soll sich ändern: Im Laufe des Jahrhunderts – also spätestens bis zum Jahr 2100 – wollen die wichtigsten Industrienationen eine kohlenstoffarme Weltwirtschaft schaffen, um so die schlimmsten Folgen des Klimawandels zu verhindern. Aber wie würde eine solche Welt aussehen? Natürlich ist es vermessen, technische Entwicklungen auf 80 Jahre vorauszusagen. Im Jahr 1930 *hat* beispielsweise niemand die Existenz eines Smartphones für möglich *gehalten*. Aber einige grundsätzliche Entwicklungen lassen sich schon heute abschätzen. ZEIT ONLINE stellt die wichtigsten vor:...”

2- “Guten Morgen! Isi: Ist ja mächtig warm bei Euch, für mich viel zu heiß! Freitag wars hier sehr warm, gestern schon nicht mehr so warm, dafür sehr schwül, und da häng ich dann ja voll durch. Bei uns *hat* es sich Gott sei Dank gestern abend *abgekühlt!!* Vanzi: Ich bin auch gespannt, wie Dir die Roulade schmecken wird! Bei mir gibt's heute abend auch nur ne Suppe, weil ich heute nachmittag zu Kaffee und Kuchen eingeladen bin. Ich *hab* mich für die Möhren-Kokos-Suppe mit Mango *entschieden*! Schönen Sonntag! LG Elke.”

The first one can be considered formal writing, since it comes from a newspaper. The second one is a more informal type of writing, since bloggers tend to use a language without formalities. In both texts, we can find the present perfect. This suggests a large usage of this tense in Modern German.

One of the most widely debated questions around the present perfect concerns its meaning and function in Modern German. For instance, a large number of scholars ground their descriptions using three parameters that Hans Reichenbach developed in 1947 to describe the English temporal system: point of speech, point of reference and point of event. The point of

speech (S) is the moment in which the speaker or writer actually says or writes something, the point of event (E) refers to the exact moment in which the particular event took place, and the point of reference (R) is the time expressed by the conjugated verb form and is often specified by temporal adverbs. In more recent research, Ehrlich (1992), Helbig & Buscha (1998), Schumacher (2005) and Rothstein (2007) define the German present perfect in terms of Reichenbach's parameters. They claim that the point of speech is at the same point as the point of reference in the temporal axis, a feature that the present perfect shares with the present. The point of event is back on the same axis, since the past participle connotes the action as temporarily situated before the time when the speaker or writer reports it. Reichenbach's parameters suggest that this tense is able to express a resultative and punctual meaning only, since the action, no matter the verb used, is situated before the moment of speech. This depiction seems to exclude automatically the usage of the present perfect with present and future temporal references, which is instead quite common in Modern German:

(4) Er hat sich damit jetzt als Politgangster entlarvt

He has himself with that now as Politgangster revealed

'He revealed himself now to be a politgangster'

(5) Gleich habe ich es geschafft.

Soon have I it achieved

'I will achieve it soon'

(Schumacher, 2005, p. 158, 161)

Weinrich (1964), Park (2003), Lombardi (2008) and Welke (2010) use a different approach in the depiction of the present perfect, highlighting the pragmatic aspects involved in its usage. Eva Clark (1990), as cited by Slobin (1994), claims, "when speakers choose an expression, they do so because they mean something that they wouldn't mean by choosing an alternative expression" (Clark, 1990, p. 417). In the same way, when German speakers choose the present

perfect they mean something specific that they could not express if they would opt for another tense, like the simple past for instance. That is why, no matter the register used, we can find a large use of this tense in a large number of textual genres beside its copious implementation in the spoken language.

As briefly summarized here, the answers available today about the meaning and the functions of the present perfect are largely discordant. As observed by Alessandra Lombardi (2008) in her work, *Tempus der Wissenschaft*, “die Ermittlung der semantischen Grundwerte der Tempi, von Anfang an im Mittelpunkt des Interesses deutscher und italienischer Tempusforschung, hat sich als echte wissenschaftliche Herausforderung erwiesen, welche zu inhomogenen und noch bis heute umstrittenen deskriptiven Ergebnissen (*Tempusdarstellungen*) geführt hat“ (p. 142). [The representation of the German tenses, which was from the beginning the center of the interest of Italian and German tense’s research, became a real scientific challenge, which led to controversial and inhomogeneous descriptive results]. This means that today we are still dealing with a large divergence in methodologies and terminologies when it comes to the depiction and the use of grammatical tenses and the present perfect in particular.

The large divergence in the depictions available also influences the way the present perfect is taught in second and foreign language classrooms. As already observed by Latzen (1977), “die Schwierigkeiten [...] haben vor allem eine Hauptwurzel, nämlich: die nicht zureichende Beschreibung des Gebrauches der Tempora in den didaktischen Lehrwerken und in den dem Lehrenden normalerweise zugänglichen oder verständlichen Grammatiken” (1997, p. 67). [the difficulties have above all a main origin: the insufficient description of the use of tenses in didactic material and in the grammars accessible to students] Also Nicole Schumacher (2005) noticed that “Bemerkenswert ist nun, dass gerade die Tempora in Lerngrammatiken, in den wenigsten Fällen, in einer transparenten Weise dargestellt werden. Sie werden nicht so präsentiert, dass Zusammenhänge von Formen und Bedeutung sichtbar werden” (2006, p. 17).

[surprisingly, the description of the German tenses in didactic material doesn't offer a clear and transparent connection between form and meaning]. For example, the possibility to express future meaning with the present perfect is often not mentioned at all, while the preterite is always defined as the tense of written German (Concu, 2015).

In order to better understand which theoretical approach better describes functions and meanings of this tense, it seems reasonable to look at how German speakers use this tense today in written texts. But because “demonstrating that a given form or construction has a certain function does not constitute an explanation for the existence of the form or construction; it must also be shown how that form or construction came to have that function” as claimed by Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994, p. 3). In other words, a synchronic analysis has to be supported by a diachronic investigation as well. For this reason, after determining which function the present perfect has today, I will address the historical evolution of this tense from its first examples in Old and Middle High German.

Combining synchronic with a diachronic analysis is an approach imbedded in a Complexity Theory and Emergent/Usage-Based Grammar perspective, which views linguistic patterns as “epiphenomena of interaction” (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008, p. 81). In other words, grammatical forms emerge as a result of communicative behavior between speakers of a specific language. “Language change is not just a peripheral phenomenon that can be tacked on to a synchronic theory; synchrony and diachrony have to be viewed as an integrated whole” (Bybee, 2010, p. 105). If the present perfect has a specific pragmatic function today, the origin can be tracked down along with the pattern of its development that was determined through how speakers made use of it over the last centuries.

The goal of this work is to gain understanding of the historical reasons behind the modern meaning and function of this construction. In particular, this work will focus on three specific questions:

- 1) *How is the present perfect used in Modern German written texts?*
- 2) *What are the origins of the meaning and functions of the present perfect?*
- 3) *How did these functions develop over time?*

The structure of this thesis is as follows: The second chapter provides a background of the present perfect in theoretical and didactic works and Complexity Theory. This chapter serves as a review of the literature about the German present perfect and some important processes involved in the evolution and development of grammatical structure over time. The third deals with the methodology used in both synchronic and diachronic analyses. The fourth deals with Modern Standard German texts and the use of the present perfect in a corpus of magazine articles. The fifth chapter is an overview of the historical development of the present perfect and its origins in the earliest stages of the language.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the first part of this chapter, I will present an overview of the theoretical and didactic works about the present perfect in order to provide a background on the way this tense is often described. In particular, I discuss several theoretical analyses of present perfect from different perspectives. In the first part, I discuss important contributions from Reichenbach, Schumacher and Weinrich. In the second part, I describe how various teaching and learning material describe the present perfect in didactic material in German textbooks and didactic grammars. The second part will deal with the application of a Complexity Theory approach to the process involved in the historical development of grammatical structures. The goal of the chapter is to present an overview of how different and contradictory the various descriptions of the present perfect are in the modern descriptions of this grammatical tense. In addition, this chapter provides theoretical background on the historical development as it pertains to Complexity Theory and grammaticalization.

2.1 Theoretical Descriptions of the Present Perfect

Reichenbach's three parameters. One of the most influential works about tense was written in 1947 by the philosopher and scientist Hans Reichenbach, who developed in his work *Elements of Symbolic Logic* (1947) a system of three parameters to describe the English temporal system. As pointed out in the introduction, the three different parameters elaborated by Reichenbach to describe the grammatical tenses in English are: the point of speech (S), which is the moment

when the speaker or writer actually says or write something, the point of to the exact moment when the particular event took place, and the point of reference (R), which is the time expressed by the conjugated verb form and it is often specified by temporal adverbs. The relation between the point of speech and the point of reference is expressed by means of the time concepts of present, past and future. The examples below are the representation of the English tenses as depicted by Reichenbach. In the first line we can find the grammatical term for that specific tense, in the second the temporal axes with the three points and in the last, an example from Modern English:

<i>Present Simple</i>	<i>Future</i>	<i>Future Perfect</i>
I see John	I will see John	I shall have seen John
-----X----->	---X-----X-->	----X---X-----X-->
S, R, E	S, R E	S E R
<i>Past Perfect</i>	<i>Simple Past</i>	<i>Present Perfect</i>
I had seen John	I saw John	I have seen John
----X---X---X-->	---X-----X-->	----X-----X----->
E , R S	R, E S	E S, R

(Reichenbach, 1947)

In the case of the present, (S) and (E) are on the same point along the temporal axis while in the case of future, (S) is behind (E) and (R). The difference between the past simple and the present perfect is the position of both (S) and (R). In the first, (R) is behind (E) and (S), while with the present perfect is (R) behind both (E) and (S).

The same parameters are also adopted in German linguistics for the description of the tense's system. Several German scholars like Ehrich (1992), Helbig & Buscha (1998) and Rothstein (2007) use these three points to describe the present perfect. Ehrich (1992) describes the present perfect putting (E) before (<) (R) and (S):

(1) Ich habe die Tür zugemacht

I've the door closed

'I have closed the door'

E < R, S

(Ehrich, 1992)

Helbig & Buscha (1998) and Rothstein (2007) also put (E) before (R) and (S). In the two examples below we find the temporal axis again with the points positioned on it:

(2) Peter ist eingeschlafen

Peter is fallen asleep.

'Peter has fallen asleep'

-----E-----S/R----

(Helbig & Buscha, 1998)

(3) Gestern ist er spät nach Hause gegangen

Yesterday is he late home come

'He has come home late yesterday'

-----E-----S/R----

(Rothstein, 2007)

In all three descriptions, the point of speech is at the same point as the point of reference, a feature that the present perfect shares with the present. The time of the event is placed earlier along the temporal axis, since the past participle expresses that the action has happened in a moment before the speaker or writer describes it.

Nicole Schumacher (2005) also pictures the present perfect in the same way. She uses the German denomination for the three points described by Reichenbach: *Äußerungszeit* (ÄZ - point of speech), *Tempuszeit* (TZ - time of reference) and *Situationszeit* (ST - time of event). In her depiction we find the temporal axis with an arrow that indicates the time's flow. On the temporal axis Schumacher puts the three parameters which are depicted here as small boxes:

(4) Er hat sich damit gestern als Politgangster entlarvt.

He had himself with that yesterday to be a politgangster revealed

‘He revealed himself yesterday to be a politgangster’

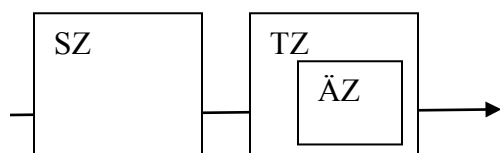


Figure 1: The present perfect by Schumacher (2005, p. 154)

The parameters establish the point of the event before the point of speech. However, as shown by Schumacher, this is not the only combination possible, since the present perfect is used by speakers to express present and future meanings, as shown in the following example:

(5) Es hat sich damit jetzt als Politgangstar entlarvt

He had himself now to be a politgangster shown

‘He revealed himself now to be a politgangster’

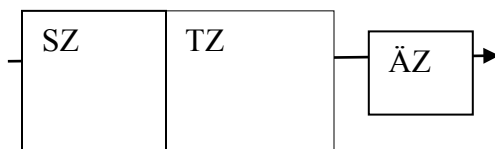


Figure 2. The present perfect expressing present meaning (Schumacher, 2005, p. 161)

According to Schumacher (2005), the present perfect allows resultative present and future meanings. As also claimed by Wunderlich (1970), “einige der Tempusmorpheme sind -isoliert genommen- in überraschender Weise vieldeutig und sind erst in ihren jeweiligen Kontexten durch pragmatische Faktoren, die durch die Sprachsituation bzw. den Äußerungstyp und die Zeitbestimmungen (Adverbien) interpretierbar sind” (p. 118). [some of the temporal morphemes – if taken in isolation - have surprisingly different meanings that can be interpreted only if they are inserted into a determined context with the aid of pragmatic factors, which can be understood through the type of situation, the kind of expressions and the temporal (adverbs) indications]. However, the fact that the actions expressed in present and in future by the present perfect have perfective features does not necessarily mean that the present perfect itself determines if the action expressed by the verb has the same feature in relation to the grammatical category of aspect. The question now is: how does German realize perfective (the action is seen as a whole and with specific temporal boundaries) and imperfective (the action has no specified temporal limits) meanings.

Aspect in German. In German aspect can be expressed by separate lexical entries. German verbs are classified in different subgroups of a particular category called *Aktionsarten* (type of actions). The actions expressed by the verbs in these subgroups have defined and specific temporal boundaries. The difference between them can be seen when comparing two verbs like *telefonieren* (to talk on the phone) and *anrufen* (to call someone on the phone):

(6) Als wir nach Hause gekommen sind, hat Paolo Giulio angerufen

When we home come are, has Paolo Giulio called

‘When we came home, Paolo was calling Giulio’

(7) Als wir nach hause gekommen sind, hat Paolo mit Giulio telefoniert

When we home come are, has Paolo with Giulio talked on the phone

‘When we came home, Paolo was talking on the phone with Giulio’

In English the difference between the two sentences is determined by the verbs and the two tenses that can be used (present perfect vs. present progressive). In German, the different duration of the action is determined by the two separate verbs *telefonieren* vs. *anrufen*, although in both sentences the same tense is used. This means that the present perfect can convey both meanings, perfective and durative, and the duration of an action is indicated by the specific verb that is used.

Various scholars classify *situationstypen* differently: Veronika Ehnrich (2007), for example, classifies them in features, actions and activities. The first refers to specific characteristics like *blond sein* (to be blond) while the latter is depicted as follows:

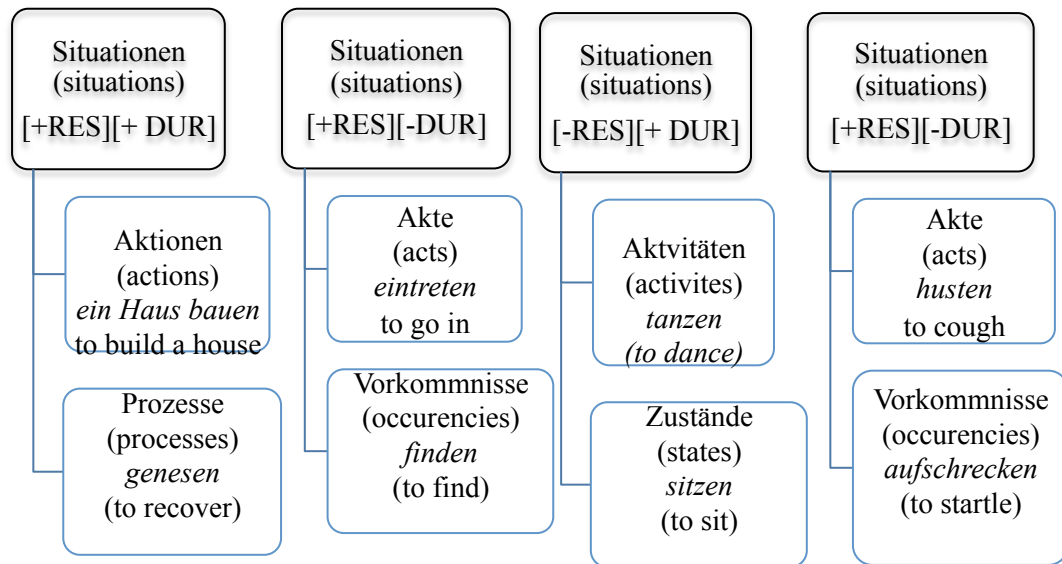


Figure 3: The classification of the situationtypes based on Ehrich (1992)

The main criterion for this classification is “resultative” [+/-RES]. [+RES] verbs denote the achievement of a goal or a state and can be also classified as “+ durative” and “- durative”: [+DUR] verbs like *genesen* (to recover) or [-DUR] like *finden* (to find). [-RES] verbs don’t imply any realizations and don’t specify clearly the beginning or the end of the specific activity. These verbs are divided in [+/-DUR]. [+DUR] verbs like *tanzen* (to dance) imply a longer activity than a [-DUR] verb like *husten* (to cough).

Nicole Schumacher uses slightly different terminology. She uses the term *Situationstypen* (types of situations), which she describes as follows: “durch die lexikalische Bedeutung des Verbs im Zusammenhang mit seinen Argumenten und Modifikatoren realisierte Kategorie, die die inhärente Grenzbezogenheit einer beschriebenen Situation bestimmt. Einem telischen Situationstyp ist eine Grenze inhärent, einem atelischen Situationstyp ist keine Grenze inhärent” (Schumacher, 2005, p. 151). [categories, which are realized through their lexical meaning together with their modifiers and arguments, which defines the temporal boundaries of a situation. No

specific temporal boundaries are specified in the case of an atelic situation type. In the contrary, with telic situation types these boundaries are implied]. The basic parameter in Schumacher's description is telicity and the difference between a telic and an atelic verb can be observed again in the comparison between *anrufen* and *telefonieren*. Schumacher's classification system is provided as follows:

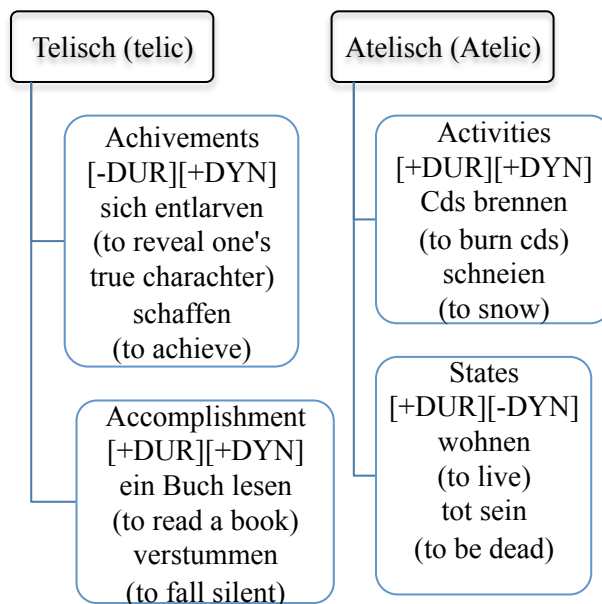


Figure 4: The classification of the Sytuationtypes based on Schumacher (2005)

The telicity of a specific situation, although potentially contained in the verb, is not always realized. The presence of a direct object (*den Apfel essen* vs. *essen* – to eat an apple vs. to eat), of a numeral adjective (*ein Apfel essen* vs. *Äpfel essen* – to eat an apple vs. to eat apples) or of a preposition (*schlafen* vs. *auf dem Bett schlafen* – to sleep vs. to sleep on the bed) determines the perfective or imperfective reading of the specific event expressed by the verb (Schumacher, 2005).

In German there are the lexical features of the verbs that carry information about the duration of an action, and not the tense itself. As highlighted by Schumacher (2005), “Das Perfekt

beinhaltet keinen aspektualen Wert in Bezug auf Perfektivität/Imperfektivität in seiner Konstruktionsbedeutung, d.h. es enthält keine Festlegung dahingehend, ob eine Situation mit oder ohne einen Endpunkt perspektiviert wird. Deshalb kann das Perfekt perfektive und imperfektive Vergangenheitslesarten realisieren" (p. 174). [the present perfect contains no spectral values in relation to perfectivity and imperfectivity in its construction's meaning. This means that it does not incorporate any fixing properties about the duration of the action expressed by the verb. Therefore the present perfect can express both past perfective and imperfective meanings].

Time of Comment and Time of Narration. Harald Weinrich wrote another relevant work on the German tenses in 1964. In his book, *Tense: narration and comment*, he suggested a completely different approach to the function and meaning of the German tenses. He divided them into two different groups, namely, the group of comment and the group of narration. In the group of comment, we find the present and the present perfect, while in the tense group of narration, we find the simple past and the past perfect. The main difference between these two groups reflects the intent of the speaker or writer: when he or she wants to comment on something, the tenses of the first group will be used. When he or she wants to tell a story, then the tenses of the second group will be used. Weinrich also discusses the different attitude of the speaker and the listener. There will be more expectant in the case of the comment and more calm and relaxed in the case of narration. The tenses of the first group are used in dialogues, poetry, scientific essays and so on. The tenses of the second group are used in stories, narration (spoken or written), historical documentation and so on. According to Weinrich, German tenses carry out specific pragmatic and communicative functions, which reflect the perspective of the speaker in relation to the information contained in the texts. It is not the mode of communication, (spoken or written) which determines the choice of one tense instead of the other, but the communicative intentions of the writer or speaker.

Other scholars follow Weinrich's theory and relate these differences to aspect of narration. Klaus Welke (2010) from the Humboldt University in Berlin claims that „das Perfekt ist auf Grund seiner spezifischen semantischen Eigenschaften das Tempus des konstatierenden Berichten [vom Vergangenen] und das Präteritum auf Grund seiner spezifischen semantischen Eigenschaften das Tempus des fortlaufenden Erzählen [vom Vergangenen]“ (p. 22). [The present perfect is the past tense of the comment because of its semantic features, while the preterite is the past tense of the narration because of its semantic features]. In the same way, Schumacher (2005) also asserts that „die Differenz [zwischen Perfekt und Präteritum] liegt in der subjektiven, sprecherbezogenen Dimension der Distanz begründet, die sich durch Weinrichs (1993) Konzepte des Erzählens und Besprechens erfassen last“ (p. 191). [The difference between Present Perfect and Preterite lies in the subjective dimension of “DISTANCE”, which refers to Weinrich's categories of comment and narration] and „um die Gebrauchspräferenzen von Perfekt und Präteritum in Vergangenheitskontexten zu veranschaulichen, sind nicht mehr temporale und aspektuale Phänomene, sondern die Subjektive Ausprägung von Distanz herauszuziehen“ (Schumacher, 2011, p. 22). [In order to highlight the usage differences between preterite and present perfect, the temporal and aspectual phenomena do not have to be considered, but the subjective markedness of the “DISTANCE”].

These claims show a lot of similarities with what Harald Weinrich theorized in his work: the usage of the tenses reflects the subjectivity of the speaker or writer and his or her relation to the information that he or she wants to communicate. The transition from a part with present perfect to another with simple past reflects the writer's change of perspective. The same observations have been made for the English language in relation to the main difference between the same tenses, present perfect and preterite. As claimed by Eva Clark (1990), if the speakers choose preterite instead of present perfect they mean something slightly different that the other tense wouldn't be able to express and vice versa.

In this brief analysis, it can be observed that there are two main different directions in the depiction of the present perfect. The first one grounds in the representation of the tense through Reichenbach's parameters situated on the temporal axis, which implies a direct connection between grammatical tenses and the category of time. The second one puts emphasis on the active role of the speaker, which is aware of the pragmatic values involved in the use of the present perfect and uses it to express something specific that it couldn't be express using another tense.

2.2 The Present Perfect in Textbooks and Didactic Grammars

As can be seen in previous sections of this chapter, the present perfect in German conveys various meanings, is used in various grammatical contexts and occurs in a wide variety of registers. The theoretical discussion above shows the complicated nature of this topic. As is evident in theoretical materials, learners are exposed to this variety of views in material for German as a foreign language. In order to demonstrate the different and conflicting view of the present perfect is described in pedagogical material, several different German textbooks and grammars were analyzed. All textbooks were written for learners of German as a foreign language in the United States:

- *Deutsch heute (3rd Edition)*
- *Assoziationen*
- *Alles klar*
- *Wie geht's?*
- *Stationen*
- *Kontakte (5th Edition)*
- *Kaleidoskop (8th Edition)*
- *Vorsprung (3rd Edition)*

The analysis of these textbooks used here show a simplistic way to describe the present perfect in comparison to what the theoretical works analyzed previously. All the material analyzed refers to it as the tense for spoken German, used in informal contexts and conversations with family and friends. The usage of this tense to express present and future meaning is not mentioned at all. This kind of depiction supports also a binary opposition between present perfect and preterite, emphasizing the misleading assumption that the difference between them simply lies in the mode (spoken vs written) and in the context (formal vs. informal). As examples of how the present perfect is treated, consider three of the textbooks that were explored:

1. Augustyn, P. & Euba, N. (2008) *Stationen*. Cengage Learning: in this textbook the present perfect is described as “the conversational way to speak and write about past events in German”.
2. Terrell, T.; E., Tscherner; Nikolai, B. (2003). *Kontakte (Fifth edition)*. McGraw-Hill: this textbook claims that “in conversations, German speakers generally use the perfect tense to describe past events”.
3. Moeller, J.; Adolph, W. (2013). *Kaleidoskop (Eighth Edition)*. Cengage Learning: in this textbook the present perfect tense is depicted as follows: “The present perfect is also tense is often called the conversational past because it is used most frequently in conversation to refer to events in past times. Is also used in informal writings such as personal letters, diaries, and notes, all of which are actually a written form of conversation”.

The didactic grammars analyzed here, normally used to allow students to deeply focus exclusively on grammatical structures, were all published in Germany and are used in DAF (German as a Foreign Language) in Germany and in different European universities:

- *Übungsgrammatik Deutsch als Fremdsprache*
- *Übungsgrammatik Deutsch als Fremdsprache für Fortgeschrittene*

- *Übungsgrammatik der deutschen Sprache*
- *Lehr und Übungsgrammatik der deutschen Sprache*
- *Deutsche Grammatik. Ein Handbuch für den Ausländerunterricht*
- *Grammatik mit Sinn und Verstand*
- *Deutsche Grammatik. Laut. Wort. Satz.*
- *Deutsche Grammatik*
- *Deutsche Grammatik. Ein völlig neuer Ansatz*

The depictions of the present perfect seem a little bit more exhaustive than the descriptions in the textbooks from the previous section. The present perfect is described as the tense for complete actions in the past, which means that it gives the events expressed by the verbs a perfective meaning. Almost all grammars also mention the ability to express present and future meanings with this tense, giving a more complete view of the possible uses of the present perfect. As examples of didactic grammars that were explored, consider the following three examples:

1. Helbig, J. & Buscha, J. (2001). *Deutsche Grammatik. Ein Handbuch für den Ausländerunterricht*. Berlin: Langenscheid. Present perfect: *Bezeichnung eines vergangenen Geschehens. Bezeichnung einer vergangenen Geschehens mit resultativem Charakter. Bezeichnung eines zukünftigen Geschehens* (In this grammar the present perfect is described as a tense that can express not only past, but also future meaning. In both cases the action is described as perfective.).
2. Hentschel, H. (2010). *Deutsche Grammatik*. Berlin/ New York: Walter De Gruyter. Present perfect: *Das Perfekt gehört zur grammatischen Kategorie Tempus. Die Perfekttempi signalisieren, dass eine Situation vorzeitig zur eine Referenzzeit noch relevant ist* (The present perfect is used to express events in the

past that are still relevant to the reference time, which is the time expressed by the conjugated verb form and it is often specified by temporal adverbs).

3. Dreyer, H. & Schmidt, R (2009). *Lehr und Übungsgrammatik der deutschen Grammatik*. Ismaning: Max Hueber. Present perfect: *Sprechtempus für vergangene Handlungen, Vorgänge, Zustände. Sprechtempus auch schriftlich in der direkten Rede. Für Informationen, die zeitlich vor einen allgemeinen gültigen Aussage stehen* (This grammar defines the present perfect using the register: it is a *Sprechtempus* (speech tense), but it can be also used in the written language in direct speech acts).

2.3 Discussion

The analyses of the different material in this first part displays divergences not just between the different categories of material (theoretical works, teaching material and didactic grammars), but also inside the same category, where depictions sometimes seem to contradict themselves. The graph below offers a visual representation of the results obtained:

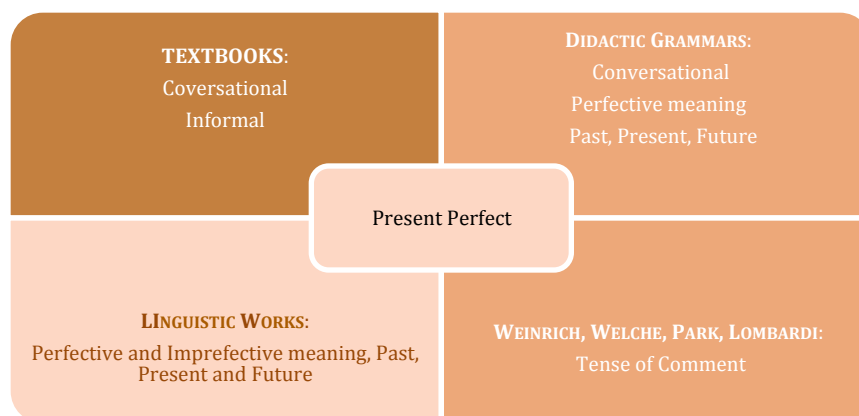


Figure 5: The different depictions of the German present perfect

There is a lot of divergence in the way the meaning and the functions of the German present perfect are depicted in the material analyzed here. In particular, the textbooks in section 2.2 offer a simplistic and misleading view of this tense, defining it as the tense for conversation and informal contexts. The didactic grammars do a little bit better in the comparison, giving an ampler picture of the uses of the present perfect. Lastly, the theoretical works, as already mentioned, can be divided in two groups. One uses the three temporal points originally elaborated by Reichenbach and describes grammatical tenses along a particular spot on the temporal axis. The other involves pragmatics and a definitely more active role of the speakers who are aware of the meanings and functions of every tense and use them to express their attitude in relation to the information they are communicating.

2.4 The Grammaticalization of Linguistic Structure

In the previous two parts of this chapter, we looked more closely at ways in which the present perfect in Modern German is described. The question I want to deal with now is, how its meaning and functions came into being over time or, in other words, I want to focus on the grammaticalization of the present perfect as a commentary tense, using Weinrich's terminology.

Grammaticalization refers to the process whereby new constructions come to be used in a language because of the reanalysis of them through the increased frequency of usage. The construction acquires a new meaning, which allows the growth of the number of contexts in which it can be used. Grammaticalization also highlights the dynamic feature of languages and the historical changes in which they are involved. Grammaticalization can be seen as a part of the of the Emergent Grammar framework, as theorized by Hopper in 1999. At the same time, it can be considered compatible with a Complexity-Theory approach, which sees languages as complex adaptive systems: "When linguistic structure is viewed as emergent from the repeated application

of underlying process, rather than given a priori or by design, then language can be seen as a complex adaptive system” (Bybee, 2010, p. 2).

Complexity Theory offers a new approach to applied and historical linguistics today, fostering a change in the way we look at human languages. In particular, Complexity Theory views languages as continuously evolving systems with emergent structures, developed through usage and repetition. “From a complexity theory perspective, a language at any point in time is the way it is because of the way it has been used” (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2009, p. 80). In this perspective also human languages are viewed as complex adaptive systems, which interact with their environment, adapt to it through self-organization and, as a result of these processes, they change over time. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron underline the dynamic nature of the human languages in their work “Complex Systems and Applied Linguistics” and consider the linguistic patterns as “epiphenomena of interaction”, emphasizing in this way the essential roles of the agents and their contribution to language change and evolution. Human languages are no longer studied as an autonomous set of grammar rules developed on their own and learned by speakers of a specific linguistic community. but they are rather viewed as dynamic systems strictly related to their speakers and to their environment. The authors highlight that “language structure is shaped by the way that language is used” (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2009, p. 93), and, quoting Nettle’s, claim that “the structure of language has emerged from the kind of message speakers wish to convey and the kind of cognitive, perceptual, and articulatory mechanisms they have to convey them, either by biological evolution, or cultural evolution, or more likely by some combination of the two” (Nettle, 1999, p. 12).

Complexity theory draws attention to the strong connection between speakers and languages and how the first influences the second and vice versa. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron explain magisterially this phenomenon when they claim that “language emerges upwards in the sense that language-using patterns arise from individuals using the language interactively,

adapting to another's resources. However, there is reciprocal causality, in that the language-using patterns themselves, downwardly entrain emergent patterns" (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2009, p. 80). In other words, a Complexity-Theory historical linguistics approach assumes that both synchronic and diachronic analyses should be combined, because "language change is not just a peripheral phenomenon that can be tacked on to a synchronic theory; synchrony and diachrony have to be viewed as an integrated whole" (Bybee, 2010, p.2).

Because of the importance of combining synchronic and diachronic analyses, the study of the development patterns involved in the grammaticalization of grammatical structure is vital to understanding how linguistic constructions came to have their modern meaning and functions. Different scholars have studied this phenomenon focusing on different languages. In particular, Bybee (2003), studied grammaticalization of the verb "can" from the Old English Era to Modern English. In her article "Mechanisms of Change in Grammaticization: The Role of Frequency", Bybee describes how the increase of frequency of use of a specific grammatical structure contributes to the loss of the semantic force of the particular structure. This process is called semantic bleaching or generalization and implies the loss of specific features of meaning. As a consequence, the number of contexts in which the structure can be used increased progressively. The verb "can" in Old English was used to express various types of knowing and with a noun denoted a person, a skill, or a language. The sense of knowing came from knowing an acquaintance or an acquired knowledge or skill. *Cunnan* had very limited use with infinitive objects in the Old English period and it was used with just three semantic classes of verbs. Due to the bleaching of meaning, it started to be used in combination with an increased number of verbs. As noticed by Bybee (2003), the Chaucer texts reveal that the use of *can* with infinitives has expanded to other semantic classes of verbs. These include verbs denoting states of mind that are not strictly intellectual, like *love*, *suffer* and *have patience*; verbs denoting states that are not mental or emotional; finally, verbs indicating a change of state in another person and verbs

indicating an overt action like to ride, to go, to send, to climb, to steal, etc. New pragmatic associations are now available to this verb, which is capable of taking on new discourse functions that arise from the contexts in which it is commonly used. The verb “cunnan” also underwent phonological reduction due to the frequency of use and today has the modern form of “can”. The loss of specific semantic nuances allows the formation of new combinations with this verb and contributed to the acquisition of the modern meaning and function of this modal verb.

A Complexity-Theory approach takes into account such dynamic processes (like grammaticalization) that are involved in the historical changes in a specific language, since they are not mere descriptions based on synchronic observations, but they also provide a satisfactory explanation of “why” these structures are the way they are today. The role of frequency is also relevant in this approach, since influences the meaning and the morphology of the units involved and contributes to language change. An increased frequency may cause, for instance, the weakening of semantic values and may determine the further development of a particular structure, which will emerge in new context and with a different meaning.

The goal of this work is, indeed, not only to understand the meaning of the German present perfect, but also to gain some insights into how this tense came to have the meaning it has today in Modern German. Therefore, a Complexity-Theory approach can be considered as the most suitable for the purpose of this thesis, because it also emphasizes the role of the speakers in these evolutionary processes, seeing both speakers and languages as a whole and not as separated entities.

The next two chapters focus on both synchronic and diachronic observations on the German present perfect on written texts from different historical periods of this language.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will present a description of the texts that I have included in my analyses and the way I went through them in order to find evidences for my claims. Since this study contains both synchronic and diachronic sections, I will present first the text from Modern German and then, the texts from Old and Middle High German. The main purpose of this chapter is to explain why I have chosen this particular corpus and which examples were relevant for my analysis.

3.1 Modern German

The analysis on Modern German was based on 25 articles of *Der Spiegel*, one of the most well known magazines in Germany, which deals with a significant amount of topics concerning politics, economy and society. The particular issue that I analyzed is from November 2013.

The reason behind my selection is because I wanted to include texts written in a variety close to Standard German, in order to avoid strong dialect influence. I say “strong” because I’m well aware of the fact that every speaker cannot lose completely all the diatopic features from the area she or he comes from, even if they are less visible in written forms of communication. This could be seen as one of the limitations of this work, but also as a more general one when we approach written texts. Another limitation of which I’m aware is that the articles I chose cannot offer a complete view of the usage of such tenses in German today. They can give a certain idea,

which is also valuable, but a much larger number of texts needs to be taken into consideration if we want to get a better understanding of this topic.

In these articles, I looked at the preterite and the perfect forms. For what concerns the present perfect, I didn't include the forms found in direct speech because I wanted to focus on the journalist's writing and the way she or he uses both tenses to communicate particular uses. I wanted to show that in some of the articles, the amount of the first were higher and in others, the amount of the latter was larger. Furthermore, I especially focused on an article, *Herr Meinhardt ist frei* (Mister Meinhardt is free; the full article can be found in Appendix C) This article deals with the right-wing conservative politician Patrick Meinhardt at the end of his career, after his party lost the election in Baden-Württemberg. The analysis of this particular text was not just a mere count of forms. I also looked at the type of information that was present in that particular section that showed a higher number of various tenses. For instance, in the parts in which the author was narrating the biography of the politician, the number of simple past forms were higher than present and present perfect forms. In the other parts of the article, we can find a higher number of present and present perfect instead.

3.2 Old and Middle High German

The part that focuses on the diachronic analysis contains texts from the Old and Middle High German periods. These texts were particularly useful for finding evidence about the grammaticalization of the German present perfect. Due to the nature of this work, the corpus will be limited to three texts from the Old High German period, and two from the Middle High German period. I chose these particular texts because they are similar in genre and they are not translations from any Latin work. They are also representative of these periods of the history of German. All the texts are in poetic form. This insures a homogeneous type of text to work on. If

textual similarities are found, there is a higher possibility that the examples are well established and could be considered acceptable evidence for the study in this thesis. The works included here are:

Old High German:

- *Hildebrandslied*
- *Ludwigslied*
- *Muspilli*

Middle High German:

- *Nibelungslied*
- *Der arme Heinrich*

The first two are heroic Old High German lays, the *Hildebrandslied* (The Lay of Hildebrand) and the *Ludwigslied* (The Lay of Ludwig) and the third, is the remaining part of the an epic poem called *Muspilli*. The first was written around 820 AD “on the blank front and back pages of a Latin manuscript from the monastery of Fulda and is written in an impossible mixture of High and Low German because someone has tried, but failed, to translate a High German original into Low German” (Hasty, Hardin, 1995, p. 196). The second one “celebrates the victory of the West-Frankish Ludwig III over the Normans at Saucourt in 881” and was found in a French monastery (Collitz, 1910, p. 96). The “dialect is Rhenish Franconian with an admixture of Low and Middle Franconian.” (Hasty, Hardin, 1995, p. 217). The third one was composed in the Bavarian area around 870 and it is a mixture of christian and pagan traditions and figures. The beginning and the last part are missing, while the central part of the poem is the only remaining piece. Although there is not a strict linguistic homogeneity, both lays can be considered part of Old High German literary sources.

The *Nibelungenlied*, one of the most important literary texts in Middle High German, is a heroic poem written between 1190 and 1200, “it is handed down in thirty variants, partly complete and partly incomplete and written in an area between the cities Passau and Vienna” (Collitz, 1910, p. 147). *Der arme Heinrich* is a narrative poem written by Hartmann von Aue. The poem tells the story of a knight condemned by God to suffer with leprosy, who can save himself with the blood of a virgin.

For both Old High German and Middle High German, I looked at the examples of the present perfect, taking also into consideration the specific verse or stanza where I found them. This procedure allowed discerning between the usages of the present perfect in direct speech from the forms used in narration. The focus on the forms used in the narrative parts were particularly useful to gain a better understanding of the function of this tense in its early stages of development.

As already stated for the analysis in Modern German, I am aware that the texts that I choose cannot offer a comprehensive view of the usage of such tenses in German today. Like the articles from *Der Spiegel*, they offer a closer look at the function and meaning of the present perfect, but also here, more texts need to be included if we want to get a bigger picture of this topic.

In conclusion, the corpus included here could be considered as the basis for further research on the present perfect and an example of the methodology that could be used to enrich the number of instances for additional studies.

CHAPTER 4. THE PRESENT PERFECT IN MODERN GERMAN

This chapter focuses on the use of the present perfect in Modern German using authentic written texts. The data collected in this section come from 25 articles of *Der Spiegel* from November 2013, and refer to the usage of both present perfect and simple past in written language. In these articles, I was able to find 198 forms of the first and 516 of the latter. Although the number of simple past forms is definitely higher than the number of forms of the present perfect, the distributions of them throughout the articles was considerably varied, as shown in the table below:

Table 1: The distribution of present perfect and past simple, examples from 5 articles

Article title	Preterite	Present Perfect
Ein Profi für Runde zwei	28	11
Brennende Unterhosen	12	7
Pik ohne zwei	12	9
Machtprobe	10	13
Der emotionale Kurzschluss	6	13

The table shows a relative equal distribution of both tenses in the articles. Some of them have a majority of preterite forms, while others contain more present perfect forms. The number of present perfect forms found here contradicts the description of this tense in the didactic material analyzed in the first chapter, which defines it as the tense used in spoken German. It seems that there are some gaps between the use of this tense and how textbooks and didactic grammars describe it.

I focused on an article in particular, *Herr Meinhardt ist frei* (Mister Meinhardt is free), in order to gain insight into the usage of the present perfect in written German. The article addresses the topic of the right-wing conservative politician Patrick Meinhardt at the end of his carrier, after his party lost the election Baden-Württemberg. The following text is an excerpt from the first part of the article:

(1) „Es ist seine eigene Wahlparty, auf der das Leben von Patrick Meinhardt für drei Sekunden zum Stillstand kommt. Er steht mit verschränkten Armen in einem Hotel in Karlsruhe und wartet zusammen mit seinen Gästen aus der Partei auf die erste Hochrechnung. "4,5 Prozent für die FDP", sagt die Moderation vom ZDF. Meinhardt weiß, dass das der Moment ist, in dem alles aus dem Gleis springt. Er ist bildungspolitischer Sprecher der FDP und seit acht Jahren Mitglied des Bundestags. Auf der Landesliste Baden-Württemberg steht er auf Platz neun. 7,2 Prozent hätte seine Partei für ihn erreichen müssen. Sein Kopf ist rot, er schwitzt, niemand im Raum rührt sich, bis einer sagt: "Mein lieber Gott!" Meinhardt sucht die Blicke der anderen. Fünf Kilo *hat* er im Wahlkampf *gelassen*, seit Juni *ist* er pausenlos unterwegs *gewesen*, 22 000 Kilometer durch seinen Wahlkreis Karlsruhe-Land *gefahren*, alles mit Bus und Bahn, denn er hat keinen Führerschein. 22 000 Kilometer ist einmal um die halbe Welt. 11 500 Postkarten *hat* er *verschickt*, noch am Vortag *stand* er an den FDP-Ständen von sechs Städten und *verteilte* 300 Bananen mit den Worten: "Darf ich Ihnen ein bisschen Energie geben?", immer getragen von der Hoffnung, er könne es noch schaffen.“ This part contains 17 present forms, 2 simple past forms

and 4 present perfect forms. The whole article has in total 201 present tenses, 25 present perfect tenses and 81 simple past tenses. The distribution of these forms throughout the article also allowed the identification of particular sections: in some of them, the author uses a high number of preterite forms. In others, there is a majority of present and present perfect tenses. The parts of the article are broken down below according to their tense distribution:

Part 1:

(2) „Es ist seine einige Wahlparty, auf der das Leben von Patrick Meinhardt für drei Sekunden zum Stillstand kommt. Es steht mit verschränkten Armen in einem Hotel in Karlsruhe und wartet zusammen...“.

Präsens: 91 - Präteritum: 2 - Perfekt: 8

Part 2:

(3) „Meinhardt wurde 1966 als uneheliches Kind geboren, er wuchs bei seiner Oma auf, in einer billiger Wohnung, an einer der teuersten Straßen von Baden-Baden...“.

Präsens: 6 - Präteritum: 28 - Perfekt: 2

Part 3:

(4) “Welche Funktionen könnte sie heute noch haben? Von einem Politiker wie Meinhardt, der als persönliche Bilanz nicht mehr zu bieten hat, ist keine überzeugende Antwort zu erwarten“.

Part 4:

(5) „Und Meinhardt selbst? Er begann nach dem Abitur ein Theologiestudium...“.

Präsens: 0 - Präteritum: 4 - Perfekt: 0

Part 5:

(6) „Bis dahin hat er noch Zeit. Seine Idee ist, sich wieder selbstständig zu machen...“.

Präsens: 56 - Präteritum: 5 - Perfekt: 7”.

The five parts individuated can be distinguished not only through the types of tenses used. If we look closer at the information included in each part, we can notice that, for example,

the sections with a really high number of preterite deal with the biography of the politician. Using Weinrich's terminology, we can say that the author is combining comment and narrative parts, and the transition from a part to another is realized by changing from present and present perfect to preterite. A closer analysis of the passages where the present perfect is used reveals that it is sometimes combined together with the preterite. The following text excerpts display all the present perfect forms found in the first portion of the article:

- (7) 1. Fünf Kilo *hat* er im Wahlkampf *gelassen*, seit Juni *ist* er pausenlos unterwegs *gewesen*, 22 000 Kilometer durch seinen Wahlkreis Karlsruhe-Land *gefahren*, alles mit Bus und Bahn, denn er hat keinen Führerschein. 22 000 Kilometer *ist* einmal um die halbe Welt. 11 500 Postkarten *hat* er *verschickt*, noch am Vortag stand er an den FDP-Ständen von sechs Städten und *verteilte* 300 Bananen mit den Worten: Darf ich Ihnen ein bisschen Energie geben?", immer getragen von der Hoffnung, er könne es noch schaffen.
- (8) 2. Als die meisten seiner Gäste *gegangen sind*, sitzt er im Hotelgarten unter Geranien, drückt sich ein Taschentuch über seine Tränen und sagt: "Ich mache natürlich weiter!"
- (9) 3. Als hätte es diesen Abend gar nicht gegeben, an dem die FDP nach 64 Jahren aus dem Deutschen Bundestag *geflogen ist*. Was lernt man daraus als Mann von der FDP? Was bedeutet so ein Ergebnis für einen, der dafür mitverantwortlich ist?
- (10) 4. Wie die meisten Politiker seiner Generation *hat* Meinhardt keine große Idee, an die er glauben könnte, schon gar keine Vision, in ihm lodert auch keine politische Leidenschaft. Er *hat* das Gebetsfrühstück *eingerrichtet*, so wie andere Menschen einen Adventsbasar einrichten.
- (11) 5. Die Themen, für die Meinhardt sich einsetzt, sind die, in denen es vor allem um Chancengleichheit geht. Er selbst *hat* in seinem Leben davon *profitiert*, dass es Menschen gab, die ihm die gleichen Chancen gaben wie anderen.
- (12) 6. In der Oberstufe sammelte ein anderer Lehrer Geld, damit Meinhardt mit auf die Rom-Fahrt konnte. In der Wahrnehmung der Bürger *ist* die einst liberale FDP zu einer

Wirtschaftspartei *geworden*, die sich vor allem um die Interessen einer einzelnen Gruppe kümmerte, die des Mittelstands.

In these examples, the author combines both tenses and the change from a tense to another seems to be related to a change of perspective concerning a particular information. In these specific cases, the usage of the present perfect in a context with a majority of simple past forms has the function to highlight and emphasize a certain part of the discourse. Also Alessandra Lombardi (2008) claims that the change of tenses in German is related to a change of perspective. Hyun-Sun Park (2009) in her work, *Tempusfunktionen in Texten* also argues that we express three different intentions through tenses. In the examples listed here the author switches from one tense to the other. Unlike what the textbooks in chapter 2 indicate about the present perfect, the change is not related to any variation from a formal to an informal context or from a conversational to a written mode of communication, since the examples come from the same source. The depiction there doesn't match the usage of this tense that was observed here. Park (2009) also claims that when the present perfect is used together with the preterite, it is because he or she wants to emphasize the specific information stated in perfect. In the next examples, the sentences contain preterite forms before or right after the present perfect:

(13) “Er selbst *hat* in seinem Leben davon *profitiert*, dass es Menschen gab, die ihm die gleichen Chancen *gaben* wie anderen”.

(14) “In der Wahrnehmung der Bürger *ist* die einst liberale FDP zu einer Wirtschaftspartei *geworden*, die sich vor allem um die Interessen einer einzelnen Gruppe kümmerte, die des Mittelstands”.

(15) „. Er *hat* das Gebetsfrühstück *eingerrichtet*, so wie andere Menschen einen Adventsbasar einrichten“.

In these three sentences, the writer is highlighting the information using a different tense. German speakers are aware of the contrast between both present perfect and preterite and use it to

communicate their change of perspective with regard to that particular fact or event. The most relevant part of the discourse is stated in present perfect, while the rest is in simple past. These sentences can be seen as a realization of the principle of contrast of which Eva Clark (1990) talks in her work. The different attitude of the speakers in regard to a specific information, which is considered more relevant, is expressed through the change of tenses.

The results of the analyses of the articles from *Der Spiegel* can be used to answer the first question stated in the introduction to this work:

How is the present perfect used in Modern German written texts?

The present perfect can be considered a tense used to comment in Weinrich's sense, and speakers make specific use of tense in order to convey their speech attitude towards the information they are communicating. Among all depictions mentioned in the second chapter, Weinrich (1964) Welke (2011), Schumacher (2005) and Park (2009) better capture the usage of the present perfect in Modern German, since in the examples from the articles:

- the perfect was used in a written form;
- the context was formal;
- it expressed both perfective (11, 500 Postkarten *hat er verschickt*) and imperfective (Er selbst *hat* in seinem Leben davon *profitiert*) meanings.

The examples included in this section also show how pragmatics play a key role in the usage of tense, and how the representation through Reichenbach's parameters are unable to capture this important aspect related to tense. The separation of grammar and pragmatics does not offer a satisfactory approach to the meaning of tenses, since the first one determines the usage of specific tenses in different communicative acts.

As already mentioned in the introduction to this work, a synchronic analysis is not enough when our aim is to understand the meaning of a specific grammatical structure. It must be combined with a diachronic study. Therefore, the next chapter deals with the historical

development of the present perfect and it includes examples in written texts from the early stages of German: Old and Middle High German.

CHAPTER 5. THE PRESENT PERFECT IN OLD AND MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN

In the previous chapter, the analysis of written texts in Modern German show which function the present perfect has today. German speakers use it to express their attitude in regard to a specific information. However, as already mentioned in the introduction of this study, synchronic data often are explained and described well in light of diachronic analyses. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the present perfect constructions in Old and Middle High German. The translations in this part, if no other way specified, have to be considered mine.

5.1 Old High German

The verb flection in Old High German is determined by the grammatical categories of person (1st, 2nd and 3rd), number (plural or singular), tense (present and past simple) and mood (indicative, conjunctive and imperative). There are also infinitive forms, that is, forms not determined by person or number: the infinitive and the two participles, present and past. The past participle is formed by adding the prefix “gi” (neman-ginoman). Some verbs already with a prefix maintain it in the participle (firneman-finoman) while others formed the participle by changing the stem vowel (treffan-troffan) (Bergmann-Pauly-Moulin Fankhänel, 1999 p. 31-32). Zieglschmitd (1929), Leiss (1992), Kotin (1999), Zeman (2010) analyzed in their works the first combinations of *eigan*/*habên* plus past participle and claimed that it has to be considered as an adjectival structure, in which *eigan*/*habên* are full verbs with no auxiliary, like the examples below:

- (1) phigboum *habeta* sum *giflanzotan* in sinemo uuingarten
 a fig tree has someone planted in his wine garden
 ‘Someone has a fig tree planted in his wine garden’
 (102,2) Tatian (ca. 830)

- (2) ir den christanum namus *intfangan eigut*
 the one the name of Christ accepted has
 ‘The one who has the name of Christ accepted’
 (Exhoratio 9,5) Tatian (ca. 830)

In the next pages the same kind of combination will be analyzed in texts mentioned in the third chapter: *Hildebrandslied*, *Ludwigslied* and *Muspilli*.

In the *Hildebrandslied*, the poet makes frequent use of the simple past. It is used to describe past events and it is used also in the dialogic part, where the protagonists, father and son, are talking to each other. In this poem past participles are also used:

- (3) want her do ar arme wuntane bauga, cheisuringu *gitan*
 Whereupon he from the arm removed the ring from the emperor’s gold forged
 ‘Whereupon he removed the ring, forged from the emperor’s gold’
 Verse 33-34

- (4) untî im iro lintun uttila wurtun, *giwigan* miti wabnum
 until them their lindens little grew worn with the weapons
 ‘until both of the lindens little grew, all worn with weapons’
 Verse: 67-68

In these parts, the participle forms characterize the nouns they precede or follow with a resultative aspect, implying that “a past process brought about the state” (Slobin, 1994, p. 124). Michael Kotin (1998) in his work about the development of the passive in German claims that without an auxiliary the past participle exclusively denotes the substantive as a result of a finished action or a closed process. In this way, the past participle is used to denote a noun with a resultative state.

In the *Ludwigslied* there are mainly simple past forms used in the narration and in the dialogues. However, if this way is compared with the first one, there are a lot of combinations that include the past participle with *uuerdhan*, *uusan* and one with *eigan* (here *heigan*):

(5) So thaz uuarth al *gendiot*

When that was all completed

‘When all this had been completed’

(Verse: 9)

(6) Sume sar *uerlorane* Uuurdun sum *erkorane*

Some were lost, were some saved

‘Some were lost, some were saved’

(Verse: 13)

(7) Heigun sa Northman Harto *biduuungan*

Have them the Norsemen hard oppressed

‘The Norsemen have sorely oppressed them’

(Verse: 24)

(8) Sang uuas *gisungan*, Uuig uuas *bigunnan*

Song was sung fight was began

‘The song had been sung, the fight had begun’

(Verse: 48)

In relation to these sentences, Kotin (1999) suggests that there is no difference between the sentences we analyzed before and the sentences listed above, in which the participles are used in combination with these verbs. In other words, they are not auxiliaries yet at the time. The resultative meaning of the past participle appears with and without an auxiliary, which means that the participle keeps its original meanings in any case (Kotin, 1999, p. 82). In the sentence - *Sang was gisungan, Wig was bigunnan* – there are the two forms of *uuesan* in the past with their imperfective meanings and the two forms of the past participle, which give the nouns *Sang* and *Wig* a resultative feature, collocated in the past because of the past simple forms of *uuesan*. Both participle and auxiliary refer to a particular grammatical aspect, which is independent from the other. However, the combinations of a past participle with *eigan* in the 24th verse of the lay, seems to have a really close meaning to the present perfect in Modern German. The verb *eigan* means *haben* (to have) and is classified as a *Präterito-Präsens*, which means that the form in present and in simple past is the same and it always has a PRESENT meaning. If *eigan* has a present meaning, the past and resultative meaning of the whole structure (*heigan biduuungan*) is determined by the combination of both auxiliary and past participle.

Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994) claim "the modern perfect develops out of early resultatives as the participle loses its adjectival nature and becomes part of the verb rather than an adjective modifying a noun" (Bybee, Perkins, Pagliuca, 1994, p. 68) and that "a resultative expresses the rather complex meaning that a present state exists as the result of a previous action" (Bybee, Perkins, Pagliuca, 1994, p. 69). The connection between resultative and past, which involves cognitive association and generalization, should represent the first step of the development process of the German present perfect. But if the writer wanted to indicate an event in the past, why he didn't use the simple past, like he did in the rest of the lay? Dan Slobin in his article "Talking Perfectly: Discourse Origin of the Present Perfect", analyzed a similar structure in Old English (*Ic haebbe gibunden pone feond pe hi drehte*) and claimed that it had two different

readings, an adjectival and a perfect one. The first was really similar to a report (*I inform you that the enemy is bound and in my possession*), while the second was really similar to a claim and a negotiation (*It is I who captured the enemy, so give me my reward*). The have + past participle constructions contrasted back then with a preterite, which focused only on the subject's past agency, and not the present state of the enemy. The Old English hearer, in drawing an inference from the possessive construction, must also have had a background knowledge of the contrasting option of the preterite and this option must have played a role as soon as the ancestor of the perfect contrasted with the preterite in a given speech context (Slobin, 1994, p.127).

Both adjectival und perfect readings could have been present as well in the verse of the *Ludwigslied* and in a similar construction in *Muspilli*:

(9) Heigun sa Northman Harto biduuungan

Have them the Norsemen hard oppressed

‘The Norsemen have sorely oppressed them’

(Verse: 24)

ADJECTIVAL: The Normans have them burdened

PERFECT: The Normans have burdened them

(10) denne der paldet der gipuazzit hapet

the one can be happy that penance done has

‘Who has done penance may be happy’

(Verse 99)

ADJECTIVAL: The one, who has penance done, may be happy

PERFECT: The one who has done penance, may be happy

Like the Lay of Ludwig, Muspilli is written using the simple past in almost all past events reports but in one of them we find the past participle combined with *habên/eigan*. In both cases the authors were probably already aware of the pragmatic difference between past simple and the combination of *habên/eigan* plus the participle.

What is relevant here, as highlighted by Slobin as well, is ‘the intent of the speaker’ in choosing the perfect rather than the simple past. The claim reading of this construction could be considered the original core of the German present perfect, which arose with the usage of this construction. As Bybee claimed, citing Traugott and Dasher, “inferences arising frequently with a construction can become part of the meaning of the construction. Given that the inference of intention often accompanies the use of this construction, the result is that ‘intention’ becomes part of the meaning of the construction” (Bybee, 2006, p.721).

In the early stages of the development of the German present perfect, it is possible that both readings coexisted. However, with the repeated usage of this form, the intention of the author to make a claim about a specific piece of information slowly took over the adjectival reading. That is why Kuroda found some usage of the present perfect in the Gospel book by Otfrid (ca. 865), in which past simple and present perfect seem to be interchangeable:

(11) That hábest du uns gehéizan

That have you us promised

‘You have promised it to us’

(O.V, 24,3)

(12) Thoh habet er uns gezeigot

That has he us shown

‘He has shown that to us’

(III -3-3)

(13) Ih haben iz fúntan in mir, ni fand ih líbes uuiht in thír.

I have it found in me, never found I good thing in you

‘I have found it in myself, I never found something good in you’

(I-18-28)

(14) Er habet in thar gizaltan drost mánagfaltan

He has in that announced consolation varied

‘He has announced him the varied consolation’

(IV-15-55)

Here of particular interest is the example (13), in which the poet made use of both tenses in the same sentence, present perfect and preterite, highlighting the fact that at the time in which the gospel was written, the present perfect had already started to compete with the past simple and it was used with specific pragmatic implications that differentiate it from the preterite.

Here we are reminded again of the already mentioned principle of contrast stated by Eva Clark (1990). In (13) the present perfect states the more relevant information for the author: he or she was able to find good in his or her self. This part is more important than the fact that the writer wasn't able to find good in the other.

5.2 Middle High German

Similar to what is found in Old High German, the verb flection in Middle High German is determined by the grammatical categories of person (1st, 2nd and 3rd), number (singular and plural), tense (present and past simple), and mood (indicative, conjunctive and imperative). There are also infinitive forms, that is, forms not determined by person or number: the infinitive and the two participles, present and past. The past participle is formed adding the prefix –ge- (*nemangenomen* (Bergmann-Pauly-Moulin Fankhänel, 1999, p. 75). This prefix does not appear with verbs that already have an inseparable prefix (*vernehem-vernomen*) or is formed with a changing

of the stem vowel (*treffen-troffan*; *warden-worden*) (Hennings, 2003, p. 111-112). In the *Nibelungenlied*, and in particular, in the first three adventures analyzed here we can observe a similar tense use like the one observed in the *Hildebrandslied* and *Ludwigslied*. The preterite is largely used for the narration of the events around the three kings and Kriemhild. The past participle is also used like in Old High German in order to provide a resultative state to nouns it is used with:

(15) Uns ist in alten mæren wonders vil *geseit*

Us is in old tales wonders a lot said

‘We are told in old tales about many wonders’

(Verse: 1)

(16) Kriemhilt *geheizen*

Kriemhilt called

‘called Kriemhilt’

(Verse: 7)

However, we find similar combinations here to the one in the *Ludwigslied* with past participle and *habên*:

(17) Die drîe kûnege wâren, als ich *gesaget hân*

The three kings were, as I said have

‘The three kings were, as I have said’

(Verse: 29)

(18) ouch die besten recken, von den man *hât gesaget*

also the best warriors, about what someone has said

‘also the best warriors, as someone has said’

(Verse: 31)

In example (17) the combination is used in a sentence with a preterite form. The poet in this case wants to highlight the fact that he already referred to the information given in simple past. A similar meaning is in example (18), but this time the poet is pointing out that he is reporting information from a different source. Both combinations are used in a text in which the main tense is the preterite. The author seems to recognize the pragmatic and communicative function of the present perfect and its contrasting effect, and he used this structure to signal and attract the attention of the reader. At the beginning of the *Hildebrandslied* we have a similar communicative intention (reporting someone else’s information) which is expressed in simple past: *Ik gihorta ðat seggen*. In Middle High German, the opposition between report and claim, or comment and narration, if we want to use Weinrich’s terminology, seems to be gaining its own space in specific pragmatic contexts. In adventures two and three, the preterite is again largely used in the narrative parts and in the dialogues. However, at the strophes 83, 88, 99 and 101, the present perfect appears for the first time in direct speech too:

(19) die niemen hie bekennet, *habt ir si ie gesehen*,

which no one want recognize , have you them seen

‘which no one wants to recognize, as you have seen them’

(Verse: 335)

(20) swie ich Sîvriden nimmer *habe gesehen*

as I Sîvriden never have seen

‘I have never seen Sîvriden’

(Verse: 355)

(21) *sô sprach von Tronege Hagene. “daz hât er getân.*

In this way talked from Tronege Hagene. “that had he done.

‘In this way talked Hagen from Tronege, he has done that’

(Verse: 397)

(22) *er hât mit sîner krefte sô menegiu wunder getân.”*

he has with his strengths so many wonders done

‘He has done with his strength so many wonders’

(Verse: 408)

In the examples above, the present perfect is used in the same pragmatic contexts it was used in the examples (17) and (18). Hopper (1998) highlighted that meaning and linguistic forms emerge in contexts of dialogue and how grammar is relative to context (Hopper in Tomasello, 1998, p. 162). In the examples it seems like the perfect reading already took over the adjectival one and it became the constant meaning of this construction. Bybee (2006) argues, “as a particular string grows more frequent, it comes to be processed as a unit rather than through its individual parts. As it is accessed more and more as a unit, it grows autonomous from the construction that originally gave rise to it” (Bybee, 2006, p. 720). The combination of *eigan/habên* plus past participle is not considered anymore to be like a set of two autonomous verbs but a single structure. Young and Gloning (2004) show that earlier the past participle used in combination with both *eigan* and *habên* had an adjectival mark ending, like in the example from the Tatian, *phigboum habeta sum giflanzotan in sinemo uuینگarten*. In Otfrid this adjectival mark appears just three times in the whole text (Young & Gloning, 2004) while the other forms show not adjectival ending. In the *Nibelungenlied* the present perfect forms do not have any adjectival marking either. This process probably coincides with the spreading of the perfect

reading related with this construction, which no longer needed any ending in order to express its new pragmatic and communicative features.

A similar use of the present perfect can be found in a contemporary work of the *Nibeluneglied* and *Der arme Heinrich*. The first lines of this poem shows striking similarities with the *Nibelungenlied* for what concern the use of the present perfect construction. The text (retrieved from <http://www.fgcu.edu/rboggs/hartmann/Heinrich/AhMain/AhHome.asp>) begins with a prolog, which has a high number of preterite forms:

(23) Ein ritter sô gelêret was,
 daz er an den buochen las,
 swaz er dar an geschriben vant;
 der was Hartmann genant.
 dienstman was er ze Ouwe.
 er nam im manige schouwe
 an mislîchen buochen;
 dar an begunde er suochen

However, in the next lines the author starts to use the present perfect:

(24) nu beginnet er iu diuten
 ein rede, die er geschriben vant.
 dar umbe *hât* er sich *genant*,
 daz er sîner arbeit,
 die er dar an *hât geleit*

iht âne lôn belîbe,
und swer nâch sînem lîbe.

(25) An im wart erzeiget,
als ouch an Absalône,
daz diu üppige krône
werltlicher süeze vellet
under die vüeze
ab ir besten werdekeit,
als uns diu schrift *hât geseit*.

(26) dô der arme Heinrich
driu jâr dâ entwelte
unde *im* got gequelte
mit grôzem sêre den lîp,
nû saz der meier und sîn wîp
unde ir tohter, diu maget,
von der ich iu ê *hân gesaget*

In these examples, the use of the present perfect shows a lot of similarities with the one in the *Nibelungenlied*. In particular, in verse 90, the present perfect is used in exactly the same context as in the verse 31 of the Lay:

Table 2: The present perfect in the *Nibelungenlied* and *Der arme Heinrich*.

<i>Nibelungenlied</i>	<i>Der arme Heinrich</i>
Die drîe kûnege wâren, als ich <i>gesaget hân</i> , von vil hôhem ellen. in wâren undertân ouch die besten recken, von den man <i>hât</i> <i>gesaget</i> .	An im wart erzeiget, als ouch an Absalône, daz diu üppige krône werltlîcher sûeze vellet under die vûeze ab ir besten werdekeit, als uns diu schrift <i>hât geseit</i> .

In both cases the poets are emphasizing the fact that they are reporting the information they heard from someone else. This “highlighting” function of the present perfect is very similar to what Alessandra Lombardi (2011) claims about the usage of this tense in Modern German, when she describes its use in a sentence when the preterite was also used. This particular function of the present perfect, which is today the most characteristic factor when it comes to the comparison with the preterite, as shown in the forth chapter of this work, starts to emerge already in the Middle High German era in specific communicative contexts, like the one described above. In both *Nibelungenlied* and *Der arme Heinrich* the authors seem to be not only perfectly aware of this new pragmatic nuance of the present perfect, but also confident enough about how to use it in their writings to convey a particular attitude in relation to specific information. The use of the present perfect in Middle High German helps to understand why the present perfect is used today in the way we observed in the articles from *Der Spiegel*.

5.3 Discussion

The brief analysis in this chapter has shown when the present perfect started its development from an adjectival structure to a periphrastic one, and when it began to be used in written texts with a specific function that can be considered the core of the modern meaning of this tense. Paul Hopper (1999) claims “grammar forms in context” (p. 156). The implementation of a specific grammar construction in certain pragmatic environments determines the meaning of that structure. In the texts analyzed in this section, the present perfect appears in dialogues, a favorable environment for the use of this tense to “comment”, as theorized by Weinrich (1964), and in some passages with a specific function: to highlight certain chunks of information in order to capture the attention of the reader. The use of the present perfect instead of the simple past also reflects the changing perspective of the author in relation to that particular information. The observations made in this chapter allow us to sketch a probable first development schema of the German present perfect:

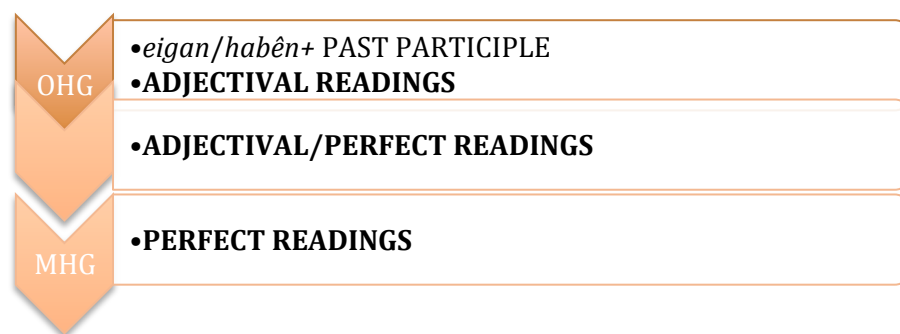


Figure 6: The development of the German present perfect

The three different steps, from the adjectival reading to the perfect one can be considered as emergent through the continuous usage of this tense in those specific communicative contexts we found in the *Nibelungenlied* and *Der arme Heinrich*, which forged the development path of this tense. As tracked by Kuroda (1999), the frequency of this construction from the Old High

German period to the nineteenth century increased. The following graph shows how the frequency grew in this sense:

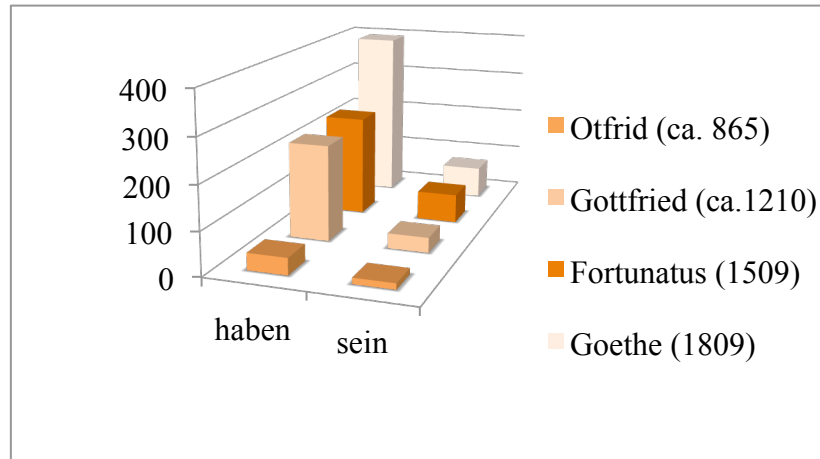


Figure 7: The frequency growth of the present perfect from Kuroda (1999)

The present perfect occurs 50 times in its earliest attestation in the corpus is in Otfrid's *Evangelienbuch* (ca. 865). The frequency is higher in each subsequent text in the corpus, including 250 times in Gottfried's *Tristan* (ca. 1210), 300 times in *Fortunatus* (ca. 1509), and 400 times in Goethe's *Elective Affinities* (1809). What the graph shows refers to the grammaticalization of the present perfect, which is, as already described in this work, the particular process, in which a structure started to be use in more contexts with a consequential growth in frequency.

The following examples are present perfect attestations from the Gospel's book and *Tristan* analyzed by Kuroda (1999) in his book:

(17) Ih haben iz fúntan in mir, ni fand ih líbes uuiht in thír.

Ni fand_in thír ih ander gúat, suntar rózagaz muat.

I have it found in me, never found I good thing in you.

Never found in you I other good as melancholy tears

“I have found it in myself, I never found something good in you.

I never found something different as melancholy and tears”.

(I-18-28) Otfrid

(18) Ich hân mir eine unmüezekeit

der werlt ze liebe vür geleit

I have to me a new thing to do

to the world for love served up

“I have served up my self a new thing to do

for the love of the world’s sake”

(Verse: 45) Tristan

The communicative intentions which the present perfect is used are really similar to the ones we observed in the *Nibelungenlied* and in *Der arme Heinrich*. These can be considered as the pragmatic environments in which the grammaticalization of the present perfect took place. The repeated usage of this tense in such linguistic contexts is what shaped the modern meaning of this tense as observed in Modern German. These observations also highlight, in more general terms, the essential role of the speakers in creating grammar and contributing to the historical evolution of languages. In this particular case, the Old and Middle High German speakers, because of their communicative needs, used linguistic resources to do that.

The dynamic of language evolution with the creation of grammatical structures by the speakers in order to satisfy new communicative needs, strongly supports the view of languages as

complex adaptive systems, as described in the second chapter of this study. Furthermore, the analysis conducted here suggests that a deep understand of a grammatical structure requires more than a mere synchronic approach, but also a study of the developmental path that it went through. The role of the speakers also has to be taken into consideration, since they take active part in the creation of grammar.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS

The observations made in this work highlight the strict connection between language and speakers in the development process of the German present perfect and how the communicative and pragmatic features we observe in Modern German started to emerge already in Old and Middle High German. Even with the limited written corpus included in this study, we can now answer the research questions stated in the introduction to this work.

1) *How is the present perfect used in Modern German written texts?*

The articles included in this study show that the present perfect is widely used in written German and, when used, it has a specific pragmatic function, which can be described using Weinrich's terminology, as described in the second chapter of this thesis. Among all depictions used and analyzed here, the pragmatic approach proposed by Weinrich, Welke, Park, Schumacher and Lombardi, indeed better captures the status of the German present perfect today. It is used to reflect a particular attitude of the speaker or writer in regard to certain information. This was also particularly visible in all the sentences in which the present perfect was used in combination with the preterite, as shown in the fourth chapter. It highlighted the particular statement made using this tense and indirectly reflected the intent of the speaker or writer. The analysis conducted here supports an approach to tense that also includes pragmatics.

The parameters theorized by Reichenbach and used by several scholars to describe the present perfect, which is described in terms of a particular spot on the temporal axis, don't offer a satisfactory explanation to the reasons why this tense is used in the way German speakers. The reason goes behind the mere representation of the categories of present, past or future.

As well as answering the initial questions postulated in the introduction to this work, the observation made in Modern German also allows us to draw some conclusions about one other aspect related to the present perfect: the way it is described and taught in second and foreign language classes. The materials analyzed in the second chapter don't offer a satisfactory explanation of the meaning of the present perfect in German. Especially in the material used in German classes in the United States, the depiction of the present perfect is limited to its use in the spoken language. Its usage in written informal contexts and how German speakers express present and future events are not taken into consideration. These findings support the claims of scholars like Latzel and Schumacher, who also emphasize this issue in their works, as already mentioned in the introduction.

The analyses of texts in Old and Middle High German allow us to address the other two questions stated in the introduction to this work:

2) *What are the origins of the meaning and functions of the present perfect?*

The present perfect originated from an adjectival structure, in which both verbs were autonomous units. Bybee (2003) claims that, when two or three elements often come together, they begin to be perceived as a unit rather than a combination of different linguistics components. In the same way, the combination of *eigan/habên*+ past participle also started to be seen as a single unit, and this created the favorable condition for re-analysis of the structure. The speakers started to use the present perfect in particular speech contexts, like the ones found in Old and Middle High German (see chapter 5), and for a specific purpose: to highlight certain information and to indirectly communicate a change of perspective in regard to it. The present perfect functioned (and still

functions) as a toll for the expression of these particular semantic nuances (claim or negotiation) that the speakers want to embed in that specific information.

3) *How did these functions come into being over time?*

Its new semantic meaning, due to the re-analysis by the speakers, led to an increased frequency of its use in those particular specific pragmatic contexts observed in the last chapter. In other words, this switch in tense occurred whenever the contrast with the preterite was relevant for the writer or speaker to connote the information as a claim or negotiation. These particular contexts are the ones in which the grammaticalization of the present perfect took place. The acquired meaning of this brand new construction made possible its implementation in a higher number of contexts (as also shown by Kuroda, 1999 in chapter 5). This use of the present perfect in those particular contexts over and over again contributed to shape the meaning of this tense in Modern German. According to Tomasello (1998), the overall function of languages is communication, which has two basic aspects, strictly connected to each other: pragmatic and semantic. Both aspects, as we saw, played an essential role in the development of the present perfect, because they reflect not only the information the speaker wants to communicate, but also, HOW the speaker wishes to tell it (Tomasello, 1998, xiv).

Overall, this work provides support for a Complexity-Theory and Emergent Grammar approach on the study of language evolution. Languages can be considered indeed as dynamic systems and this study has shown that the speakers played an important role in shaping the meaning of the modern present perfect. Agents are a vital part in complex adaptive systems and they contribute to language change. The formation of the present perfect also highlights how languages adapt to internal changes: its formation made new combinations possible and changed the structure of the German tense system. No external forces caused the change, but the speakers themselves, which operated like agents in the system of language. The present perfect emerged through communication and because of communication needs. Therefore, this tense and possibly

every grammatical structure emerged in a specific context and acquired its own meaning as a result of its usage in that context.

This study has, of course, some limitations. Some of them refer to the general issues related to research in historical linguistics. We don't have any access to actual recordings that would allow us to have also insight in the spoken language. We also have to deal with a limited written corpus. Our claims are deducted indirectly with the documents that are available today. We can appeal to this or that approach, but our claims rarely can be proved with a sufficient amount of evidence. Other issues refer in a more specific way to German and to the goal of this work. A larger corpus of texts needs to be included and a comparison to Old and Middle Low German could be really useful to support the claims made here. A look at Early New High German could also be used to get a bigger picture of the evolution of this tense in the history of German. Also, a comparison with the evolution of this tense in other Germanic languages could allow us to gain insight into the cognitive processes that lead to the formation of grammatical structures, in order to see if they can be considered language specific or common to every language. Possible similarities among related languages can be used to establish common pattern in language evolution, as well as divergences, that can be also used to better understand the process involved in language change that are specific for that particular domain.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

List of the textbooks:

1. Moeller, J. (1984) *Deutsch heute (3rd Edition)*. Houghton Mifflin College Div.

The present perfect is described as commonly used in conversation to refer to past actions or states. The present perfect tense refers to a period of time that continues into the present and is thus still uncompleted.

2. Tschirner, W.; Strasser, N. (1991) *Assoziationen*. McGraw-Hill.

Here the present perfect is depicted as used in conversations: to describe the past a speaker uses the perfect tense of most verbs and the simple past tense of *sein*, *haben*, *wissen*, and the modal verbs.

3. Otto, W., von Schmidt, W. (1996). *Alles klar*. Prentice Hall.

This textbook pictures the present perfect as commonly used in conversations.

4. Sevin, D.; Sevin I. (2000). *Wie geht's?*. Cengage Learning.

Here the authors talk about the present perfect as the tense used in everyday conversations

5. Augustyn, P. & Euba, N. (2008) *Stationen*. Cengage Learning.

In this textbook the present perfect is described as “the conversational way to speak and write about past events in German”.

6. Terrell, T.; E., Tscherner, Nikolai, B. (2003). *Kontakte (Fifth edition)*. McGraw-Hill.

This textbook claims that in conversations, German speakers generally use the perfect tense to describe past events.

7. Moeller, J.; Adolph, W. (2013). *Kaleidoskop (Eighth Edition)*. Cengage Learning.

In this textbook the present perfect tense is depicted as follows: The present perfect is also tense is often called the conversational past because it is used most frequently in conversation to refer to events in past times. It is also used in informal writings such as personal letters, diaries, and notes, all of which are actually a written form of conversation.

8. Lovik, T.; Guy D., Chavez, M (2014). *Vorsprung (Third Edition)*. Cengage Learning.

Here the present perfect is described as used when speaking or writing informally about past events and call it the conversational past. It is used for action completed in the past.

Appendix B

List of the didactic material:

1. Hall, K.; Scheiner, R (2001). *Übungsgrammatik Deutsch als Fremdsprache*. Ismaning: Max Hueber Verlag.

Present perfect: *Bezeichnung vergangener Vorgänge, die einen Bezug zur Gegenwart haben. Erzähltempus der gesprochenen Sprache.*

In this grammar the present perfect is used to describe past actions that have still relevance in the present. Furthermore, it is used in the spoken language for narrative purpose.

2. Hall, K.; Scheiner, R (2001). *Übungsgrammatik Deutsch als Fremdsprache für Fortgeschrittene*. Ismaning: Max Hueber Verlag.

Present perfect: *Bezeichnung eines vergangenen Geschehens. Bezeichnung vergangener und abgeschlossener Vorgänge, die einen Bezug zur Gegenwart haben. Bezeichnung eines zukünftigen Geschehens. Erzähltempus der gesprochenen Sprache.*

This grammar, from the same authors of the one in 2.1.1, adds more features to the depiction of the present perfect: together with past actions, it can also express future events.

3 A. Hering, M. Matussek, M. Perimann-Balme (2002). *Übungsgrammatik der deutschen Sprache*. Ismaning: Max Hueber.

Present perfect: *Tempus für die Vergangenheit in der gesprochenen Sprache. Abgeschlossene Vorgänge in der Vergangenheit mit Gegenwartsbezug. Für Zukunft (als Ersatz für das Futur).*

The present perfect is used in the spoken language and it is also depicted as tense for perfective actions in the past, which refer to the present, and as substitute for the future tense).

4. Dreyer, H. & Schmidt, R (2009). *Lehr und Übungsgrammatik der deutschen Grammatik*. Ismaning: Max Hueber.

Present perfect: *Sprechtempus für vergangene Handlungen, Vorgänge, Zustände. Sprechtempus auch schriftlich in der direkten Rede. Für Informationen, die zeitlich vor einen allgemeinen gültigen Aussage stehen.*

Also this grammar defines the present perfect using the register: it is a *Sprechtempus* (speech tense), but it can be also used in the written language in direct speech acts.

5. Helbig, J. & Buscha, J. (2001). *Deutsche Grammatik. Ein Handbuch für den Ausländerunterricht*. Berlin: Langenscheid.

Present perfect: *Bezeichnung eines vergangenen Geschehens. Bezeichnung einer vergangenen Geschehens mit resultativem Charakter. Bezeichnung eines zukünftigen Geschehens.*

In this grammar the present perfect is described as a tense that can express not only past, but also future meaning. In both cases the action is described as perfective.

6. Rug, W. & Tomaszewski, A (2001). *Grammatik mit Sinn und Verstand*. Stuttgart: Klett.

Present perfect: *Hauptverwendung: Bezeichnung eines vergangenen Geschehens. Nebenverwendungen: Realisierung der Zeitstufe Zukunft und Bezeichnung eines zukünftigen Geschehens.*

In this grammar the usage of the present perfect is divided in primary and secondary uses. The first one refers to the ability to express past events. The latter are related to the register (spoken) and to the ability of this tense to express future meaning.

7. Welleman, H. (2008). *Deutsche Grammatik. Laut. Wort. Satz. Text.* Heidelberg: Winter.

Present perfect: *Das Perfekt ist die 2. (analytische) Zeitform für Vergangenes. Im Perfekt wird etwas Vergangenes festgestellt oder ein Geschehen beschrieben, das auf der Sicht der Gegenwart, schon als abgeschlossen gilt. Außerdem wird es verwendet, um einen Vorgang darzustellen, der in der Zukunft abgeschlossen sein wird.*

In this grammar the present perfect is strictly related to the perfective aspect and can be also used to express future meaning.

8. Engel, U. (2009). *Deutsche Grammatik.* München:Indicium.

Present perfect: *Ein Sachverhalt ist für die Gesprächsbeteiligten von Belang und ist vergangen oder abgeschlossen.*

According to this grammar the present perfect is used when the type of information that the speakers want to convey is still relevant for them, in the opposite case the speakers use the preterite.

9. Hentschel, H. (2010). *Deutsche Grammatik.* Berlin/ New York: Walter De Gruyter.

Present perfect: *Das Perfekt gehört zur grammatischen Kategorie Tempus. Die Perfekttempi signalisieren, dass eine Situation vorzeitig zur eine Referenzzeit noch relevant ist.*

The present perfect is used to express events in the past that are still relevant to the reference time, which is the time expressed by the conjugated verb form and it is often specified by temporal adverbs.

10. Darski, J. P. (2011). *Deutsche Grammatik. Ein völlig neuer Ansatz*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang.

Present perfect: *Das Perfekt bezeichnet ein Geschehen, das im Sprech- Schreibzeitpunkt bereits abgeschlossen ist. Der Abschluss kann sich sowohl auf die Vergangenheit wie auch auf die Zukunft beziehen. Deshalb unterscheidet man beim Perfekt meistens zwei Varianten: das Perfekt zur Bezeichnung eines vergangenen Geschehens und das Perfekt zur Bezeichnung eines zukünftiges Geschehens. Grundlegen für den Gebrauch des Perfekts ist die Festlegung. Das Perfekt stellt einzelne, schon abgeschlossene Tatsache fest.*

The present perfect is described here as tense for perfective actions. It can also express both past and future meaning, but even then, the action is characterized as closed.

Appendix C

Herr Meinhard ist frei (Der Spiegel Nr. 50/ 9.12.13)

Es ist seine eigene Wahlparty, auf der das Leben von Patrick Meinhardt für drei Sekunden zum Stillstand kommt. Er steht mit verschränkten Armen in einem Hotel in Karlsruhe und wartet zusammen mit seinen Gästen aus der Partei auf die erste Hochrechnung. "4,5 Prozent für die FDP", sagt die Moderation vom ZDF. Meinhardt weiß, dass das der Moment ist, in dem alles aus dem Gleis springt. Er ist bildungspolitischer Sprecher der FDP und seit acht Jahren Mitglied des Bundestags. Auf der Landesliste Baden-Württemberg steht er auf Platz neun. 7,2 Prozent hätte seine Partei für ihn erreichen müssen. Sein Kopf ist rot, er schwitzt, niemand im Raum rührt sich, bis einer sagt: "Mein lieber Gott!" Meinhardt sucht die Blicke der anderen. Fünf Kilo hat er im Wahlkampf gelassen, seit Juni ist er pausenlos unterwegs gewesen, 22 000 Kilometer durch seinen Wahlkreis Karlsruhe-Land gefahren, alles mit Bus und Bahn, denn er hat keinen Führerschein. 22 000 Kilometer ist einmal um die halbe Welt. 11 500 Postkarten hat er verschickt, noch am Vortag stand er an den FDP-Ständen von sechs Städten und verteilte 300 Bananen mit den Worten: "Darf ich Ihnen ein bisschen Energie geben?", immer getragen von der Hoffnung, er könne es noch schaffen. An diesem Abend versteht er, dass niemand mehr seine Energie haben möchte. In einigen Tagen wird er 47 Jahre alt und in vier Wochen arbeitslos. In das Hotel in Karlsruhe kommt jetzt, etwas verspätet, ein Konditor aus der Gegend und bringt eine riesige Torte mit einem Foto von Meinhardt, das ihn fröhlich zeigt. Der Konditor zerschneidet die Torte, reicht Meinhardt ein Stück, der jetzt an einem der Bistrotische an der Seite steht und sein eigenes Lächeln vom Teller löffelt. "Was wir brauchen, ist eine wirkliche Erneuerung!", sagt er, als eine Reporterin vom Fernsehen ihn interviewt. Als die meisten seiner Gäste gegangen sind, sitzt er im Hotelgarten unter Geranien, drückt sich ein Taschentuch über seine Tränen und sagt: "Ich mache natürlich weiter!" Er entschuldigt sich, verschwindet kurz auf dem Klo, kehrt zurück

in den Raum, in dem seine Party zu Ende geht. Er packt jetzt beim Aufräumen mit an. Von weitem hört man ihn noch lange reden, mit kräftiger Stimme, als ginge es morgen früh weiter wie immer. Als hätte es diesen Abend gar nicht gegeben, an dem die FDP nach 64 Jahren aus dem Deutschen Bundestag geflogen ist. Was lernt man daraus als Mann von der FDP? Was bedeutet so ein Ergebnis für einen, der dafür mitverantwortlich ist? Was ändert es an einem Leben, das von Politik geleitet war? Patrick Meinhardt sitzt am Morgen nach der Wahl schon früh in einer Air-Berlin-Maschine, die ihn von Karlsruhe in die Hauptstadt fliegen wird, zu den anderen.

Vormittags tagt der Vorstand der FDP-Fraktion im Bundestag, mittags die gesamte Fraktion. Auf dem Weg vom einen in den anderen Raum sind die Kameras auf die Gesichter von Verlierern gerichtet, Philipp Rösler, Rainer Brüderle. Meinhardt verschwindet hinter ihnen im Großen Sitzungssaal, er begrüßt Parteikollegen mit einem Schlag auf die Schulter. Er sagt: "2017 sind wir spätestens wieder da!" Am Nachmittag bespricht er mit seinen Mitarbeitern den Auszug aus dem Abgeordnetenbüro. Er muss seine Wohnung in Prenzlauer Berg kündigen und sein Bürgerbüro räumen, in Bretten bei Baden-Baden, seiner Heimat. Drei Tage später kommt er in dieses Büro, eine Mitarbeiterin packt erste Kartons. Das Büro liegt direkt am Marktplatz von Bretten, in den großen Fenstern kleben Plakate von Patrick Meinhardt und seine Telefonnummer in großen Ziffern, damit sie jeder leicht erkennen und wählen kann. Die Nähe zum Bürger war Meinhardt schon immer wichtig. Es ist eigentlich ein trauriger Tag heute, aber man merkt ihm das nicht an, denn für den Abend erwartet er schon wieder die nächsten Bürger, Mitglieder der Initiative Baden-Baden Stadt. Sie treffen sich zum Oktoberfest in der "Alten Turnhalle". Sie unternehmen auch Wanderungen, suchen Ostereier oder feiern Fasching. Meinhardt ist ihr Vorsitzender, seit 20 Jahren. Seit er 27 Jahre alt ist. Meinhardt bewegt sich durch die Halle, wie Dieter Thomas Heck durch die Hitparade raste. Meinhardt rennt, redet, trinkt einen mit, überreicht Blumensträuße an Jubilare, er macht diese Menschen glücklich. Er ist ein guter Gastgeber. Ein Lokalreporter, der Meinhardt während dessen Wahlkampf des Öfteren traf, sagt, dass Meinhardt sich verändert habe

in dieser Zeit. Meinhardts Stimme sei noch lauter geworden und auch sein Lachen. Er habe gekämpft, bis zuletzt. Man könnte sich jetzt fragen, was die Menschen heute von Politikern erwarten, außer dass sie kämpfen und fröhlich sind. Das Allensbach-Institut stellt "im Ansehen der Politiker einen historischen Tiefstand" fest. Die FDP befindet sich demnach auf dem tiefsten Punkt des Tiefstands. Wenn man Meinhardt fragt, was er geleistet habe in seinen acht Jahren Bundestag, als Vorsitzender des Arbeitskreises Innovation, Gesellschaft und Kultur der FDP-Bundestagsfraktion, als Vorsitzender der Parlamentariergruppe Östliches Afrika, als Vorsitzender des FDP-Bundesfachausschusses Bildung, Wissenschaft, Forschung und Technologie, sagt er, er sei einer von denen gewesen, die die Gruppe der "Christen in der FDP-Bundestagsfraktion" gegründet haben, ein wöchentliches Gebetsfrühstück mit Andacht. Das ist vielleicht das Überraschendste an Patrick Meinhardt: das Gebetsfrühstück. Man traut einem Politiker der FDP nichts zu, was sich in einer Partei des wirtschaftsliberalen Starrsinns Aufmerksamkeit verschaffen könnte, nichts Übernatürliches, nichts, was mit einem Gemeinschaftsgefühl verbunden werden könnte. Wie die meisten Politiker seiner Generation hat Meinhardt keine große Idee, an die er glauben könnte, schon gar keine Vision, in ihm lodert auch keine politische Leidenschaft. Er hat das Gebetsfrühstück eingerichtet, so wie andere Menschen einen Adventsbasar einrichten. Es macht ihm Spaß, aber es ist nicht Teil einer politischen Strategie. Meinhardt ist einer dieser vielen Abgeordneten, die ihr Thema nicht mit in den Bundestag bringen, sondern sich so lange treiben lassen, bis sie auf ein Thema stoßen, von dem sie irgendwann verkünden: Das Thema ist meines. Man kann dieses Zufallsprinzip für unpolitisch halten, man kann aber auch sagen: Die Generation Meinhardt passt Politik ihren Lebensgewohnheiten an. Man muss Politik nicht so fundamental verstehen wie Herbert Wehner, um sie attraktiv zu finden. Dann zählt Meinhardt noch folgende Punkte auf: Er habe das Konzept "Bildungssparen" mit auf den Weg gebracht, eine Art Bausparmodell fürs Studieren. Er habe das "Deutschlandstipendium" zusammen mit anderen erfunden, 14 000 zusätzliche Universitätsstipendien. Und für die 7,5 Millionen Analphabeten im

Land habe seine Arbeitsgruppe ein Konzept für einen Masterplan entwickelt. Was er im Bundestag gern noch getan hätte? Das Deutschlandstipendium ausbauen, den Masterplan für die Analphabeten schreiben. Er sagt, er wäre an diesen Themen gern noch länger drangeblieben.

Meinhardt wurde 1966 als uneheliches Kind geboren, er wuchs bei seiner Oma auf, in einer billigen Wohnung, an einer der teuersten Straßen von Baden-Baden. Und während die anderen Jungs zum Spielen gingen, erledigte er für seine Oma den Einkauf oder die Gänge zum Sozialamt. Eines Tages klingelte die Diakonin der Gemeinde an der Haustür. Sie fragte, ob Patrick mit zum Kindergottesdienst kommen wolle. Und weil Meinhardt kein anderes Leben kannte als das der Aufgaben, wurde er mit elf Jahren Leiter der Kinderkirchengruppe. Er las den Vier- bis Elfjährigen jeden Sonntagvormittag aus der Bibel vor oder erzählte ihnen die Geschichte von Jona und dem Fisch. Das habe ihm, so beschreibt er es, "unendlich viel innere Freude bereitet". Er konnte das gut, vor anderen reden. Er mochte es, wenn man ihm zuhörte. Mit 21 wurde er Kreisvorsitzender der Jungen Liberalen in Baden-Baden. Er erfuhr damals, dass es Streit gab zwischen den Bürgern und einem Künstler, der für 1,6 Millionen Mark einen Brunnen auf den Leopoldsplatz stellen ließ und dafür jetzt auch noch drei Kugelbäume fällen wollte. Zusammen mit seinen vier Kollegen informierte er die Presse, stellte einen Tapeziertisch in die Fußgängerzone und sammelte Unterschriften gegen das Fällen ein, 3000 Stück. Danach kannten alle die Jungen Liberalen in Baden-Baden. Zwei Monate später gehörte Meinhardt zum Landesvorstand der FDP und besuchte Veranstaltungen in ganz Deutschland. Wieso die FDP? "Aus einem liberalen Grundempfinden", sagt er und schließt kurz die Augen. Außerdem habe ihn dieses eine Bild beeindruckt, Hans-Dietrich Genscher auf dem Balkon der deutschen Botschaft in Prag im Herbst '89. Das war "gigantisch", sagt er. Er mag diese starken Wörter, "gigantisch", "grandios", "brutal gut", er setzt auch ein kurzes Lachen hinter jeden seiner Sätze, als brauchte er ständig Verstärker. Erst später beschäftigte sich Meinhardt mit politischen Inhalten, er las Max

Weber, Theodor Heuss, Karl-Hermann Flach, Reinhold Maier. Ihm gefiel die Idee der Graswurzeldemokratie. Er versuchte, das auch in seinem Bürgerbüro in Bretten zu leben. Also baute Meinhardt eine gemütliche Sitzecke in sein Büro. "Das Schönste waren hier eigentlich immer die Bürgerempfänge!", sagt er. Bei den Empfängen hatte er den Laden voll mit 40, 50 oder 60 Bürgern. Meinhardt brauchte immer die Bürger, um sich wohl zu fühlen. Die Themen, für die Meinhardt sich einsetzt, sind die, in denen es vor allem um Chancengleichheit geht. Er selbst hat in seinem Leben davon profitiert, dass es Menschen gab, die ihm die gleichen Chancen gaben wie anderen. Einer seiner Lehrer half ihm, weil es bei Meinhardt zu Hause einen Fernseher gab, aber kein Geld für Bücher. In der Oberstufe sammelte ein anderer Lehrer Geld, damit Meinhardt mit auf die Rom-Fahrt konnte. In der Wahrnehmung der Bürger ist die einst liberale FDP zu einer Wirtschaftspartei geworden, die sich vor allem um die Interessen einer einzelnen Gruppe kümmerte, die des Mittelstands. Mit Meinhardts Vorstellungen von Chancengleichheit hat diese FDP nichts zu tun. In den Augen vieler Bürger ist es die Partei, die arbeitslosen Schlecker-Angestellten riet, schnellstmöglich und aus eigener Kraft und ohne staatliche Hilfe eine "Anschlussverwendung" zu finden. Es sieht so aus, als hätte sie das Gefühl für die Gesamtheit der Menschen verloren, als verfügte sie nur noch über einzelne Inselbegabungen, was sie für den Alltag untauglich macht. Wer nicht weiß, wozu die FDP gut sein könnte, der weiß auch nicht, warum er den FDP-Abgeordneten Meinhardt wählen sollte. Die FDP war mal die Partei der Bürgerrechte, die Partei der begründeten Skepsis gegenüber der herrschenden Meinung, die Partei der Argumentierer, hin und wieder auch die Partei der Querulanten. Sie war nicht pausenlos allein die Partei des Machtkalküls und des politischen Opportunismus. Sie galt als Funktionspartei, weil sie eine Funktion hatte, im Zweifel die des Züngleins an der Waage. Welche Funktion könnte sie heute noch haben? Von einem Politiker wie Meinhardt, der als persönliche Bilanz nicht mehr zu bieten hat als ein Gebetsfrühstück, ist keine überzeugende Antwort zu erwarten. Seine Kollegen im Parteivorstand müssten eine Antwort haben, aber sie reden sich nur darauf heraus, dass die

Große Koalition riesige Pannen verursachen werde. Sie hoffen auf Fehler der beiden Volksparteien, die noch gar keine Koalition gebildet und folglich noch gar keine Fehler begangen haben. Das ist eine erschreckend dürftige Hoffnung für einen Neuanfang der FDP. Für die FDP selbst geht es jetzt bloß noch um ihre eigene "Anschlussverwendung". Welche wird Meinhardt finden? An einem Montag Mitte Oktober läuft Meinhardt leger, in Jeans, Sakko und offenem Hemd, über die Flure des Abgeordnetenhauses in Berlin. Er zeigt sich wieder gutgelaunt, obwohl ihm über das Wochenende ein Herpes an der Oberlippe gewachsen ist und er in den Tagen zuvor mit seinem Blutdruck zu tun hatte. Der ist zu hoch, obwohl er eigentlich immer zu niedrig war. Jetzt suchen die Ärzte nach einer Ursache, aber finden sie nicht. Er solle sich schonen, haben sie gesagt. Aber Meinhardt hat zu tun. Für den Nachmittag erwartet er schon wieder Gäste in seinem Abgeordnetenbüro. Auch in Berlin hat er immer gern Feste gegeben, zu Weihnachten oder zum Saint Patrick's Day. Er schüttet Wasabi-Nüsse auf ein Tablett. Nur noch bis Mitternacht wird er Abgeordneter sein. Seine Mitarbeiter haben, während er sich mit seinem Blutdruck herumschlug, sein Büro verpackt. Möbelpacker brachten seinen schweren Eichenschreibtisch nach Baden-Baden, über das Kreuz, das immer über seiner Tür hing, sagte er: Das Kreuz verlässt als Letztes den Raum. Seine Akten und Papiere liegen in hohen Kartons gestapelt. Um die Rechner sind Folien gespannt, die Kabel aufgerollt. Die SPD zieht ein. Meinhardt musste schon seinen Abgeordnetenausweis abgeben, seine Mailadresse, die Telefonnummer. Er sucht jetzt einen Korkenzieher. Er läuft über den Flur Richtung Küche. Vor dem Büro von Stefan Ruppert, der noch wenige Stunden lang Parlamentarischer Geschäftsführer der FDP ist, steht ein Karton mit der Aufschrift "Bücher zum Mitnehmen". Er trifft Birgit Homburger, die in Wollpullover und Turnschuhen Sektgläser in Papier wickelt und blaue Müllsäcke befüllt. Er begrüßt Pascal Kober, der sagt: "Und? Jetzt die Schlüssel abgeben? Na ja, toi, toi, toi." Mit Meinhardt werden an diesem Tag 92 weitere Bundestagsabgeordnete arbeitslos. Auch 700 Partei- und Fraktionsmitarbeiter verlieren ihre Stelle. Das Jobcenter von Berlin-Mitte hat ein "Notfall-Büro" im Haus eingerichtet.

Die FDP glaubte immer daran, dass der Markt solche Situationen schon regle. Sie kann jetzt ausprobieren, wie sich das in der Wirklichkeit verhält. Zu Meinhardts Berliner Büro gehören fünf Mitarbeiter, junge Männer mit weichem Gesicht und sanfter Stimme. Meinhardt hat in den vergangenen Tagen viel Zeit darauf verwendet, sie in neue Jobs zu telefonieren. Zu seinen guten Eigenschaften gehört auch, dass er sich kümmert. Seine Mitarbeiter bleiben weitgehend in anderen Fraktionen, unter dem regenfesten Dach der Politik. Meinhardt ist mit dem Korkenzieher zurück, er erwartet Kollegen, Mitarbeiter aus dem Fraktionsbüro und aus der Arbeitsgruppe. Am Wochenende musste er ihre Namen, Adressen und Geburtsdaten in eine Liste eintragen und sie an den Empfang schicken, damit sie überhaupt noch reinkommen. Der erste Gast an diesem Tag ist ein Bildungsreferent aus der Arbeitsgruppe. Er ist 13 Minuten zu früh. Er hat jetzt Zeit. An einen leeren Schrank gelehnt stehen drei Sekretärinnen. Eine von ihnen ist 38 Jahre alt, seit 14 Jahren in der Fraktion, sie arbeitete schon im Vorzimmer von Wolfgang Gerhardt. Sie sagt, sie gehe zurück in die Bundestagsverwaltung, aber ihre beiden Kolleginnen seien noch auf der Suche. "Am schwersten haben es die Referenten und die älteren Sekretärinnen", sagt sie. "Die jungen Mädels sind alle untergebracht." Das Problem sei, dass viele von ihnen kaum Englisch sprechen würden und auch am Computer nicht so fix seien. "Wenn man hier arbeitet und dann in die freie Wirtschaft geht, ist das etwas ganz, ganz anderes", sagt sie. Es sieht so aus, als würde der Markt für sie erst mal nichts regeln. Und die anderen? "Über weitere Pläne lässt sich derzeit nichts sagen", heißt es aus der Pressestelle von Philipp Rösler. Rösler war früher in der Augenheilkunde tätig. "Leider werden wir Ihre Frage nicht beantworten können", schreibt jemand aus der Pressestelle von Rainer Brüderle. Er ist 68 und will vielleicht mal in Rente. "Über weitere Pläne ist noch nichts entschieden", übermitteln die Presseleute von Dirk Niebel. Der arbeitete früher im Arbeitsamt. Guido Westerwelle ist Anwalt mit Zulassung. Meinhardt sagt, er werde Westerwelle demnächst einen Brief schreiben. Er möchte ihn motivieren, Spitzenkandidat der FDP bei der Europawahl zu werden. Und Meinhardt selbst? Er begann nach dem Abitur ein

Theologiestudium, er brach es ab, weil er seine Oma pflegte, bis sie 1994 starb. Er verdiente sein Geld als Nachhilfelehrer. Er ist ohne Ausbildung und ohne Beruf. Für jedes Abgeordnetenjahr bekommt er, sofern er keine anderen Einkünfte hat, einen Monat Gehalt, also achtmal 8000 Euro. Im Sommer ist Schluss. Bis dahin hat er Zeit. Seine Idee ist, sich wieder selbständig zu machen, mit einem Büro für "Politische Beratung", das den Namen "Carpe Diem" tragen soll. In seinem Büro in Berlin erhebt er jetzt das Glas Sekt. "Das soll kein Abschiedsempfang sein, nur ein Zwischenempfang, bis wir uns spätestens in vier Jahren hier wiedersehen werden", sagt er. Das Wort "spätestens" dehnt er über mehrere Sekunden. Er bittet alle, ihre Mail-Adressen aufzuschreiben, er wolle Kontakt halten. Für einen Berufspolitiker, wie Meinhardt einer ist, ist die Zeit nach der Wahl die Zeit vor der Wahl. Er schreibt Leserbriefe, Pressemitteilungen, Facebook-Einträge. Ein Politiker, der die Bürger braucht. Nicht Bürger, die Politik brauchen. Vielleicht liegt darin das große Missverständnis von Patrick Meinhardt. Zehn Tage später, am 31. Oktober, ist auch Meinhardts Brettener Büro ausgeräumt. Der Mietvertrag läuft in der Nacht aus. Meinhardt nutzt die Gelegenheit, um sich den Bürger noch einmal ins Haus zu holen. Er hat Schnittchen vorbereiten lassen. Am Abend besucht er den Gottesdienst in Bretten zum Reformationstag. "Ständig ist Erneuerung", sagt der Pastor der Gemeinde. In dunklem Mantel steht Meinhardt in der Bank, senkt den Kopf. Er betet. In zwei Tagen will er sich auf dem FDP-Landesparteitag zum Generalsekretär wählen lassen. Das Amt eines Generalsekretärs bedeutet vor allem: viel Arbeit und kein Geld, es ist ein Ehrenamt. Meinhardt hat schon neun Ehrenämter. Im Grunde bestand sein Leben aus Ehrenämtern, seit er losgelaufen war als Kind und anfang mit Jona und dem Fisch. Mit dem Amt des Generalsekretärs würde er wenigstens noch vorkommen. Er könnte Pressemitteilungen schreiben. Die Zeitungen würden berichten. Das Amt würde ihn am Leben halten. Vielleicht merkt der Bürger ja, wenn Politiker auf seine Kosten leben, und vielleicht muss Meinhardt nur noch merken, dass der Bürger es gemerkt hat. Am Morgen des Landesparteitags stößt Patrick Meinhardt zu Fuß aus dem Nebel an die Veranstaltungshalle in

Filderstadt. Er ist wie immer mit der Bahn gekommen. Er sagt, er habe die vergangenen 48 Stunden nur telefoniert, er sei um 3.30 Uhr aufgestanden. Er begrüßt einige seiner Parteifreunde, er geht mit hektischen Schritten auf sie zu, und schon eine Stunde später, um 9.45 Uhr, liegt sein Haar verschwitzt im Nacken. An diesem Tag geht es für einige der Delegierten um die letzten Ämter und Ehrenämter in der baden-württembergischen FDP, sie suchen sie, wie Hungernde Nahrung suchen. Meinhardt muss bis zum Nachmittag warten, bis er erfährt, ob Michael Theurer ihn rettet. Theurer will sich zum Landeschef wählen lassen, und wenn das so kommt, zieht er Meinhardt mit. Vorher spricht die bisherige Landesvorsitzende Birgit Homburger, die 2009 FDP-Fraktionsvorsitzende im Bundestag wurde und nach knapp 19 Monaten von ihrer Partei entmachtet worden ist. Sie kennt den Schmerz, den der Verlust von politischen Ämtern verursachen kann. In ihrer Rede sagt sie, sie blicke auch auf schwere Zeiten zurück. Sie erinnert die anderen daran, dass auch für sie die wirklich schweren Tage noch kommen werden, dann, wenn keiner von ihnen hier im Saal mehr eine Rolle spielen werde. Es gibt andere, die politische Niederlagen schlechter verkraftet haben als Homburger. Die Bündnisgrüne Andrea Fischer wurde 1998 Gesundheitsministerin, drei Jahre später schickten ihre eigenen Leute sie nach Hause. Sie wurde depressiv. Gegen Nachmittag tritt Michael Theurer zu seiner Rede an. Meinhardt wirkt unruhig, sein Blutdruck presst ihm dunkelrote Flecken ins Gesicht, er beklatscht seinen Freund Theurer nach jeder Pointe. Kurz nach 16 Uhr gewinnt Theurer im zweiten Wahlgang die Wahl. Die Delegierten bestätigen Patrick Meinhardt als Generalsekretär mit 72,05 Prozent der Stimmen. "Knapp drei Viertel", er wirkt sehr zufrieden. Sein Leben ist zurück ins Gleis gesprungen. Er hofft jetzt darauf, dass er Beisitzer im Bundesvorstand wird. Generalsekretär in Baden-Württemberg, Beisitzer im Bundesvorstand. Patrick Meinhardt baut sich ein neues Leben zusammen. Ein Parteiposten-Leben. Der Freiheit des Marktes, dem Evangelium seiner Partei, hat er sich gar nicht erst ausgesetzt. Er musste keinen Wirklichkeitstest bestehen. Im politischen Apparat haben sich Plätzchen gefunden, die Meinhardt warm halten. Wie geht es ihm damit? Er

antwortet auf diese Frage am Tag nach seiner Ernennung zum Generalsekretär in einer SMS. Er schreibt: "Ich war gestern und heute von einer ausgesprochenen inneren Ruhe getragen. Ich habe mich sehr gefreut - und seither so viele Gespräche mit Delegierten geführt, dass ich sie schon nicht mehr zählen kann ... Theodor Heuss hat gesagt: „Ich habe nicht das Talent, faul zu sein!“ Das passt auch ziemlich gut zu mir. Herzlichst, schon wieder aus Berlin. Ihr Patrick Meinhardt."