



Infinitival perfects in Appalachian English: modals vs. infinitival *to*

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Overview: “silent HAVE” in infinitival perfects

Some Appalachian English speakers exhibit infinitival perfect constructions which variably lack the auxiliary *have*, as in (1) and (2) (examples adapted from the AAPCAppE):

(1) Modal + participle:

- I don't know what I **would** __ **done** if it wasn't for her.
- You **could** __ **heard** a pin drop.
- You the one **should** __ **said** something.

(2) infinitival-*to* + participle:

- She had **to** __ **been** up in her sixties when she quit work.
- They should've refused **to** __ **went** in the mines.
- I would've really loved **to** __ **got** that baseball.

Present Study

- Examines the frequency of the presence vs. absence of *have* with modals vs. *to*, in a one-million-word parsed corpus of Appalachian English (the AAPCAppE; <http://csivc.csi.cuny.edu/aapcappE/>)
- Reveals differences between the two types of perfect
- Investigates special semantic properties of *to*-perfects which may be responsible for difference

Infinitival perfects: modals more frequent than *to*

In the AAPCAppE, infinitival perfects with modals are overall more frequent than infinitival perfects with *to*:

TABLE 1

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| modals + infinitival perfect: | 797 tokens |
| <i>to</i> + infinitival perfect: | 69 tokens |

silent HAVE not a uniform phenomenon

Despite the difference in absolute frequency: **silent HAVE** relatively less frequent with modals / relatively more frequent with infinitival *to*:

TABLE 2

| | overt <i>have</i> | silent HAVE | total: |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| mod + infinitival perfect: | 715 (90%) | 82 (10%) | 797 |
| <i>to</i> + infinitival perfect: | 19 (28%) | 50 (72%) | 69 |

English *to*-perfects: how are they different?

English has historically exhibited a **Sequence of Tense** (or, “pleonastic”) interpretation of the *to*-perfect.

PPCHE (Kroch, et al.)

- (3) He had intended **to have gone** to London with Mr. Oates.
(= He had intended **to go** to London)

- (4) If the prisoner had chosen **to have staid** in France...
(= If the prisoner had chosen **to stay** in France...)

Embedded infinitival perfect here **does not have true anterior interpretation.**

Hypothesis: silent HAVE in *to*-perfects is a marker of SoT

Note that majority of examples of *to*-perfects with silent HAVE exhibit a pleonastic (SoT) tense interpretation:

- (5) a. Wouldn't you like **to worked** in the mines today?
(= Wouldn't you like **to work** in the mines today?)
- b. They should've refused **to went** in the mines.
(= They should've refused **to go** in the mines)
- c. I would've really loved **to got** that baseball.
(= I would've really loved **to get** that baseball)
- d. She had **to been** up in her sixties when she quit work.
(= She had **to be** up in her sixties when she quit work)

Quantitative problem: *to*-perfects are rare

- Table 1: we have only 69 tokens of *to*-perfects in the corpus. The corpus is comprised of 127,375 sentence tokens. This means that *to*-perfects occur only .05% of the time.
- This rarity is not due to the vernacular-speech nature of the corpus: the Penn Parsed Corpora of Historical English (PPCHE; Kroch et al.) exhibit an equally rare rate of occurrence of *to*-perfects:

Early Mod. English (years 1500-1710):
.05% of all tokens (58 of 105,614 sentence tokens)

Mod. British English (years 1700-1899):
.07% of all tokens (129 of 178,160 sentence tokens)

Table 3: overt *have* vs. silent HAVE, with **true anterior tense** interpretation vs. **pleonastic (SoT)** interpretation:

| | overt <i>have</i> | silent HAVE | TOTAL |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| anterior interpretation | 4 (57%) | 3 (43%) | 7 |
| SoT interpretation | 14 (25%) | 41 (75%) | 55 |
| unclear from context | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| TOTAL | 19 | 50 | 69 |

NUMBERS TOO SMALL TO TELL

Qualitative problem: what to count?

Ambiguous cases yield different possible parses:

- (6) He should've refused **to put** it there.
- He should've refused **to put**_{bare-inf} it there Parse 1
 - He should've refused **to HAVE put**_{past-part} it there Parse 2

[If speaker-intended parse is (b): the count on *to*-perfects with silent HAVE increases significantly, given the large number of cases like **to put** in the relevant contexts]

- (7) If only he'd **left** sooner....
- If only he **had left** sooner Parse 1
 - If only he **would HAVE left** sooner Parse 2
 - If only he **had HAVE left** sooner Parse 3

[If speaker-intended parse is (b): the count on *modals* with silent HAVE increases significantly]

[Parse (c) is possible given the large number of examples like **If only he had [əv] left sooner...**]

Future research

- hypothesis that higher frequency of silent HAVE with *to*-perfects is attributable to semantic specialization of the construction (> SoT interpretation) must be confirmed with experimental data;
- must seek ways to determine whether possible phonological considerations (“delete *have* [əv] after *to* [tə]”) play a role in higher frequency of “silent HAVE” with *to*-perfects;
- must seek ways to determine whether apparent standard-issue *to*-infinitivals (as in (6)) should be counted as *to*-perfects

Selected references

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