

**The Past tense in the Caribbean**  
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Abstract

The use of the preterit (Pret) and present perfect (PP) have been of great interest in variationist studies because these exhibit a great deal of variation across Spanish dialects (Hernández, 2006, 2008; Howe, & Schwenter, 2008; Rojas Sosa, 2008; Sessarego, 2008; Schwenter & Torres-Cacoullós, 2008). Some studies state that the grammaticalization of the PP is a universal process (Schwenter & Torres-Cacoullós, 2008). However, Caribbean dialects are not included in these descriptions. This paper investigates the Pret and the PP in Dominican and Puerto Rican Spanish, with the purpose of providing empirical data on the use of both tenses. To meet this objective, we recorded seventeen (17) participants (six Puerto Rican, six Dominicans, and five Dominicans living in Puerto Rico). We coded each token for the Pret and PP, and analyzed the data using Valbrul. This research has found that the Pret is the default past tense marker in the Caribbean dialect. We also found that the PP is limited to the perfect of persistent situations, while the Pret did not show this restriction. These speakers retain an aspectual distinction between both tenses. Thus, we argue that the grammaticalization of the PP is not a universal process.

## 1.0 Past tense in the Caribbean

The use of the past tense has been of great interest in linguistic variation. Many studies have focused on the alternate use between the preterite (PRET) (1a) and the present perfect (PP) (1b) (Hernández, 2006, 2008; Howe, & Schwenter, 2008; Rojas Sosa, 2008; Sessarego, 2008; Schwenter & Torres, 2008).

- (1) a. Luis llegó a tiempo al salón.  
Luis arrive-PRET on time to the classroom.  
'Luis arrived on time to the classroom.'
- b. Luis no ha llegado a tiempo al salón estos días.  
Luis NEG have arrive-PP on time to the classroom these days.  
'Luis has not arrived on time to the classroom these last couple of days.'

This is because in Spanish both forms can be used to express a perfect event, since both tenses imply past and perfectiveness. This fact has triggered a debate concerning the use of both tenses.

Recent literature on the topic suggests that there is grammaticalization of the PP for Spanish. Likewise, some propose that such process is universal since it is attested in languages such as French and Italian (Hernández, 2008; Howe & Schwenter, 2008). There is variation in the level of grammaticalization of the PP. In some varieties of Spanish, like in the Peninsular and in the Salvadorian varieties, there is grammaticalization of the PP into semantic areas of the PRET (Hernández, 2006).

However, Caribbean Spanish dialects have not been described with respect to this feature. The literature has concentrated on the Peninsular and on the Continental varieties of Spanish. Accordingly, this paper deals specifically with dialects in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

## 2.0 The past tense

According to Comrie (1976), the perfect is an aspectual distinction that refers to an event as completed or ended. In this interpretation, the event is connected to the moment of speech. The author introduced a distinction to the perfect; he divided the perfect into four types of perfective events, which are the following: (a) the perfect of result; (b) the experimental perfect; (c) the perfect of persistent situation; and (d) the perfect of recent past. The perfect of result refers to the present state as a result of a past action (2a). The experimental perfect refers to a situation that happened at least once in the past and remains until the present (2b). The perfect of persistent situations represents a situation that began in the past and continues in the present (2c). Lastly, the perfect of recent past expresses a situation in which the event has a temporal proximity (2d). In Spanish, the perfect can be expressed in two ways, with the PRET and the PP. Examples (2a-b) show the distinctions of the perfect with the PP.

- (2) a. *Ha llegado* Juan.  
have arrive-PP Juan  
'Juan has arrived.'

- b. Juan *ha* *viajado* a China.  
 Juan have travel-PP to China  
 ‘Juan has traveled to China.’
- c. Pedro *ha* *vivido* en España hace dos años.  
 Pedro have live-PP in Spain V two years  
 ‘Pedro has lived in Spain for two years.’
- d. Pedro *ha* *roto* el plato hace un momento.  
 Pedro have break-PP the plate V a moment.  
 ‘Pedro broke the dish just a moment ago.’

In Spanish, the present perfect (PP) consists of an auxiliary verb, *haber*, combined with the past participle (1b; 2a-d). This tense implies perfection, that is to say, the action that is referred to is completed (Bosque & Demonte, 1999). The use of this tense indicates that an action ended before the point of reference but within the moment of speech. In other words, this tense indicates that an action occurred within the extent of our present. The process belongs to this area because the action takes place in the presence of the speaker. This does not mean that the action occurred immediately before the moment of speech, but rather the action is viewed as a result or consequence to the moment of speech (Bosque & Demonte, 1999). Example (3) exemplifies the use of this tense, in which the action of the verb is still within the present.

- (3) Se *ha* *caído* el plato.  
 It have fall-PP the plate.  
 ‘The dish fell.’

On the other hand, Comrie (1976) described the perfective as a completed past event. According to this author, the perfective indicates short duration, punctual or momentary events. Similarly, the perfective lacks a specific reference to the internal constituency of the event. In other words, perfective indicates that the event has an end point. However, a perfective event does not have a connection with the moment of speech. Thus, this contrasts with the perfect interpretation because the latter has a connection with the moment of speech. This interpretation usually appears in the PRET. According to Bosque and Demonte (1999), the PRET is a basic realization of temporal content of the past. This tense expresses a degree of chronological remoteness of the action expressed by the verb. This realization is relative because it does not contain a reference to the temporal orientation of the action (Bosque & Demonte, 1999). This means that the PRET does not specify any temporal point outside/beside the past. In (4) this point is illustrated, where anteriority is implied, without specifying the proximity of the action with regard to the moment of speech.

- (4) *Leí* el libro de aventuras.  
 read-PRET the book of adventures.  
 ‘I read the book of quests.’

There is a difference between these tenses. In (4) the reference is no other than the deictic center of the temporal system, whereas (3) introduces the precision of a

relationship of simultaneity between the reference and the moment of speech. Therefore, we can find the PP with adverbs and temporal locators that refer to actions that have not yet been completed (Bosque & Demonte, 1999), as shown in (5).

- (5) *Aún* Luis no *ha* *llegado*.  
 yet Luis NEG have arrive-PP  
 ‘Luis has not yet arrived.’

However, the PP can be used in situations that refer to an action that has already been completed, but only if the speaker wants to emphasize the validity in the present of that event (6a-b) (Bosque & Demonte, 1999).

- (6) a. *Hace* mucho tiempo que no *lo* *he* *visto*.  
 v long time that NEG PRO have see-PP  
 ‘It has been a while since I saw him.’  
 b. *He* *vivido* aquí *hace* doce años.  
 have live-PP here v twelve years.  
 ‘I have lived here for twelve years.’

The PRET can also be used with a perfect interpretation to indicate that the event is punctual. This means that the PRET can be used when the event is connected to the moment of speech (7).

- (7) *Ahora mismo* *terminé* la tarea.  
 right now finish-PRET the homework.  
 ‘I just finished my homework.’

Therefore, both the PRET and the PP can be used to express perfective and perfect situations; however, the choice is not arbitrary. There are countless factors that influence the choice.

For this research, it is important to focus on the semantic class of the verbs. For these purposes, we use Vendler’s (1967) classifications. Table 1 shows the activity, state, achievement and accomplishment verbs. The importance of this classification is that accomplishment and achievement are both telic, while the activity and states are atelic.

Table 1  
*Semantic Classification of the Verbs (Vendler, 1967)*

Predicate	States	Activities	Accomplishments	Achievements
Examples	<i>Saber</i>	<i>Correr</i>	<i>escribir un libro</i>	<i>Encontrar algo</i>
Dinamicity	-	+	+	+
Telicity	-	-	+	+
Punctuality	-	-	-	+

We expect the speakers to use PP with states, activities and accomplishments because these are durative. On the other hand, we expected the use of the PRET with achievements because these are punctual verbs. However, the speakers may use both the PP and the PRET depending on the meaning that they are trying to convey. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the effects of lexical aspect in the choice between the PP and the PRET.

### 3.0 Previous research

Most of the research on the PRET and PP has focused on American Spanish (Hernández, 2006, 2008; Rojas Sosa, 2008; Howe & Schwenter, 2008; Schwenter & Torres, 2008) and Peninsular Spanish (Schwenter & Torres, 2008). These studies have led investigators to assert that in Spanish the grammaticalization of the PP is universal. The variation lies in the level of grammaticalization reached (Schwenter & Torres, 2008). For instance, Howe and Schwenter (2008) investigated the use of past tense in Lima, Peru. They compared their findings with Madrid and Mexico and found that in Madrid the PP was preferred; on the other hand, in Lima and Mexico the PRET was chosen. They concluded that in Lima the PP is on its way to grammaticalization because it was preferred on indeterminate and irrelevant temporal contexts. The authors explained that there are different grammaticalization pathways; therefore, the PP in Lima took a different pathway from that of Madrid.

Schwenter and Torres (2008) reached a similar conclusion. They investigated the use of the past tense in Mexico and Spain. The authors found that in Spain the PP is the defective perfective marker, while in Mexico the PRET is still preferred. However, in Mexican Spanish the PP was used in the perfect of persistent situations context. This evidence led the investigators to conclude that in Mexico the PP is grammaticalizing; the only difference between both dialects is the level of grammaticalization. In Spain the PP has been fully grammaticalized while in Mexico the PP is beginning the process.

Nonetheless, Rodríguez Louro (2009) investigated the use of the PRET and the PP in Argentina. For her research she used contemporary and historical data. The author found that the PRET was preferred in this variety. Furthermore, she documented a decline in the use of the PP. This researcher concluded that the PP and PRET have shown their own particular evolution in Argentina, even though the PP has grammaticalized in Spain.

These previous studies motivated this research for the following reasons: (a) the Caribbean variety has not been included in the discussion; (b) most of the literature suggests that the PP grammaticalization is universal (Hernández, 2008; Howe & Schwenter, 2008). The data obtained from this research contribute to this debate for two reasons: (a) the corpus consists of Caribbean speakers; therefore, the results of this research represent this particular dialect in the discussion; in addition, (b) in light of the data, the universality of grammaticalization of the PP is questioned.

### 4.0 Objectives

The main objective of this research is to examine the choice of the PRET versus the PP in Caribbean Spanish. There are four secondary objectives related to the main objective, that include:

- (i) To identify contexts in which the PP and the PRET are used.
- (ii) To examine which restrictions govern the choice of PP versus the PRET.
- (iii) To compare these data with data obtained from previous research.
- (iv) To evaluate the proposed universality of the grammaticalization of the PP in Spanish.

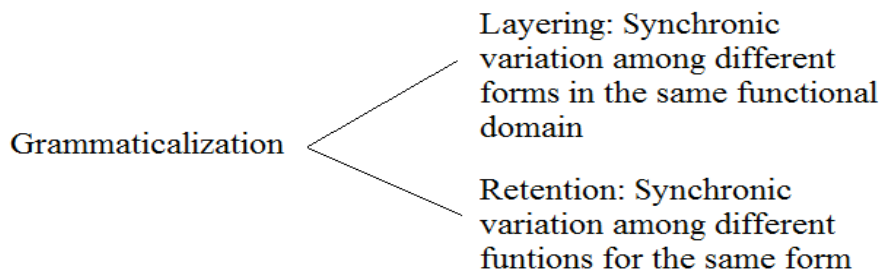
Based on the previous objectives, we formulate the following research questions:

- (i) What are the contexts that restrict the use of the PP and the PRET?
- (ii) Is there a relationship between the semantics of the verb and the choice of the perfective?
- (iii) Are telicity and duration linked to the use of the PP and the PRET?
- (iv) What is the role of adverbs in the choice between the PRET and the PP?
- (v) Is the grammaticalization of the PP universal?

### 5.0 Theoretical model

This work focuses on the grammaticalization pathways hypothesis (Bybee et al. 1994; Schwenter & Torres, 2008). This proposal is based on the concepts of layering and retention. Layering refers to two forms that have or perform the same function without a replacement of either form. This phenomenon is exemplified in (8) where *will* is the old form and *going to be* is the new one. On the other hand, retention is a form that fulfills more than one function. An example can be drawn from (9), in which *haré* implies future and modality. Both concepts are shown in Figure 1.

- (8) I *will/ am going* buy a book. (Schwenter & Torres, 2008)
- (9) *Haré* la tarea.  
do-FUT the homework.  
'I will do the homework.'



**Figure 1. Grammaticalization components** (Schwenter & Torres, 2008)

According to this hypothesis, there might be two forms with the same function or one form with different functions. Recent research has proposed that the PP will shift from perfect to perfective (Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós 2008); in other words, the PP will undergo grammaticalization into areas covered by the PRET. However, the same changes apply to the PRET.

## 5.1 Hypothesis

Following proposals of grammaticalization of the PP, we expect the following results regarding the Caribbean data:

- (i) The default perfective marker in the Caribbean is the PRET; therefore, the PP has not undergone grammaticalization in this dialect.
- (ii) The PP has greater frequency in the perfective of persistent situations.
- (iii) The duration of the event has a decisive role on the selection of the perfective marker: (a) the PRET applies to punctual events; and (b) the PP applies to durative events.
- (iv) Temporal adverbs have a significant role in the selection of the perfective marker.

## 6.0 The study

We interviewed subjects from the island of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic because they represent two different dialects within the same area, which are in continuous contact with each other. There has been a unidirectional migration of Dominicans to Puerto Rico due to the economic situation in the Dominican Republic (González-Espada, 2005). This situation has created a stigma toward the Dominican dialect in Puerto Rico. This has forced the Dominicans to incorporate features of the Puerto Rican dialect into their variety (Valentín-Márquez, 2006).

## 6.1 Participants

In this research, we use the PRESEEA (Proyecto Sociolingüístico del Español de España y América) Puerto Rican and Dominican database<sup>2</sup>. All interviews were conducted within the expectations and standards of CIPSHI<sup>3</sup>. We also interviewed 17 participants divided equally to represent all the variables. All the participants were over 25 years old. The interviews gathered spontaneous data in order to capture the natural speech of the participants. Table 2 shows the distribution of the participants.

Table 2  
*Participants*

Nationality	Quantity	Gender
Puerto Ricans	3	f
Puerto Ricans	3	m
Dominicans	3	f
Dominicans	3	m
Dominicans in P.R.	2	f
Dominicans in P.R.	3	m

## 6.2 Analysis.

For the purpose of codification, the following linguistics variables are considered (based on transliterated data):

- (9) Types of perfective [following Comrie's (1976) perfective distinctions]:

- a. *Perfective of result:*  
 [...]me *dediqué* a buscar compañía que es la que [...]
   
1rstPS dedicate-PRET to look-for companies that is DO
   
llevo diez años ya. (SJ030032H96)
   
be-PRES ten years already
   
'I spent time looking for a company in which[...] I have been ten years
   
already.'
- b. *Perfective of experience:*  
 Un tiempo *trabajé* en el estadio que le dice, en donde
   
DET time work-PRET in the stadium that PRO say where
   
juegan pelota[...] (VN5200030)
   
play baseball
   
'I worked for a while in the stadium, where people play baseball.'
- c. *Perfective of persistent situations:*  
 He *hecho* cursos técnicos. (DW A0014)
   
have done-PP courses technical
   
'I have completed some technical courses.'
- d. *Perfective of recent past:*  
 [...] porque aquí como *le dije* horita[...] (SJ2513H96)
   
because here as IO say-PRET earlier
   
'Because, as I said earlier [...]'
- (10) Temporal reference:
- a. *A few minutes ago* (event took place during the interview):  
 [...]porque aquí, como le dije *horita* [...] (SJ2513H96)
   
because here like IO say-PRET earlier.
   
'Because, as I have said earlier [...]'
- b. *A few hours before:*  
 [...] *horita* me asusté porque me fui y
   
earlier REFL scare-PRET because REFL go-PRET and
   
me quedé dormida. (SJ6113M96)
   
REFL stay-PRET asleep
   
'Earlier, I got scared because I fell asleep right away.'
- c. *Yesterday:*  
 Como pasó *ayer* en las noticias[...] (SJ006021M96).
   
as (it) happen-PRET yesterday in the news
   
'As shown in the news yesterday.'
- d. *The other day:*  
 [...]el ex-menudo *los otros días* vino por ahí[...] (SJ006021M96)
   
DET ex-menudo DET other days come-PRET PREP here
   
'The ex-menudo came around here the other day.'
- e. *Weeks before:*  
 Hace *algunas semanas* fui al cine.
   
v some weeks go-PRET DET movie
   
'Some weeks ago, I went to the movies.'



- f. *Two months ago:*  
 [...]estuve *dos meses* atrás visitando[...] (DW C 0028)  
 be-PRET two months back visit-PROG  
 ‘Two months ago, I was visiting [...]’
- g. *Once:*  
 [...]si me recuerda, yo fui *una vez*,  
 if REFL remember I be-PRET one time,  
 fui, eh, niño escucha... (SJ030032H96)  
 be-PRET INTER boy scout  
 ‘If I remember well, I was once a Boy Scout.’
- h. *Indeterminate time:*  
 [...]me *casé* con la *primera mujer*  
 REFL marry-PRET with DET first woman  
 y *tengo un hijo*.  
 and (I) have DET son  
 ‘I married my first wife and I have a son with her.’
- (11) *Adverbs:*
- a. *Frequency adverb:*  
 [...]compartimos *bien*, hemos sido *siempre bien*[...] (SJ2513H96)  
 share well, have been-PP always well  
 ‘We spend time together, we have always been very[...]’
- b. *Time adverb:*  
 Él no estuvo *este fin de semana*. (DW C 0028)  
 he NEG be-PRET this end of week  
 ‘He was not here this weekend.’
- c. *Duration adverb:*  
 Eso duró *ocho horas soplando vientos*, de qué forma. (SJ2513H96)  
 that last-PRET eight hours blow-PROG wind in what manner  
 ‘The blowing winds lasted eight hours, and they did indeed.’

Negation has two interpretations: (a) as a durative event because the non-existence of the action makes it a persistent event (12a) (Hernández, 2008); (b) as a punctual event because some events cannot be interpreted as persistent events (12b).

- (12) *Polarity:*
- a. Muy difícil[...] *No me he soltado* todavía (DW A0034)  
 very difficult NEG PRO have loose-PP still  
 ‘It was very difficult [...] I still have not loosened up.’
- b. Bueno, antes yo *no pude* disfrutar *mi niñez*.  
 well before I NEG can-PRET enjoy my childhood  
*No supe* lo que es el *cine* (SJ6032M07)  
 NEG know-PRET PRO that is the movie  
 ‘Well, I couldn’t enjoy my childhood. I didn’t know what it meant to go to the movies.’

Regarding verb classification, we use Vendler’s (1967) semantic criteria:

- (13) a. *States:*  
 [...]se enfermó cuando nació[...] (SJ6113M96)  
 PRO get ill-RET when be born-RET  
 ‘He/she got sick when he/she was born.’
- b. *Activities:*  
 Un tiempo trabajé en el estadio que le dice,  
 DET time work-RET in the stadium that PRO say  
 en donde juegan pelota (VN5200030)  
 PREP where play baseball  
 ‘I worked for a while in the stadium where people play baseball.’
- c. *Accomplishments:*  
 Mi mamá nos crió a nosotros  
 my mother PRO raise-RET PREP us  
 cuatro solos[...] (SJ006021M96)  
 four alone  
 ‘My mother raised the four of us by ourselves.’
- d. *Achievements:*  
 [...]que mi padre murió[...] (DW A0034)  
 that my father die-RET  
 ‘[...]that my father died.’

Regarding the event duration, we distinguish between punctual and durative events:

- (14) a. *Punctual:*  
 Perdí un montón[...] (SJ6032M07)  
 lose-RET DET lot  
 ‘I lost a lot.’
- b. *Durative :*  
 [...]gracias a Dios han sido buenas (VN520029)  
 thanks PREP God have be-PP good  
 ‘Thank God, they have been good.’

We could distinguish between telic and atelic events:

- (15) a. *Telic:*  
 Yo le decía que yo tengo seis años  
 I PRO say-IMP that I have six years  
 que me separé de mi esposo... (DW B 0066)  
 that PRO separate-RET PREP my husband  
 ‘I was telling you that it has been six years since I separated from my husband.’
- b. *Atelic:*  
 [...]él habló con sus amigos. (SJ0521H96)  
 he talk-RET with his friends  
 ‘He talked with his friends.’

We used these linguistic variables every time a perfective predicate was found. We measured different numerical variables with GoldVarb X for Windows (Sankoff, 2005) to get the weight of the quantified variables.

## 7.0 Results

We analyzed a total of 892 tokens in this research. In terms of percentages, 83.20 of the tokens appeared in the PRET, while 16.80 appeared in the PP. Table 3 illustrates the distribution of the past tense grams.

Table 3  
*Past tense distribution*

	N	%
PRET	742	83.20%
PP	150	16.80%
total	892	100%

Table 4 exemplifies the distribution between both tenses according to the linguistics variables studied.

Table 4  
*Distribution of significant factors of the PRET and the PP*

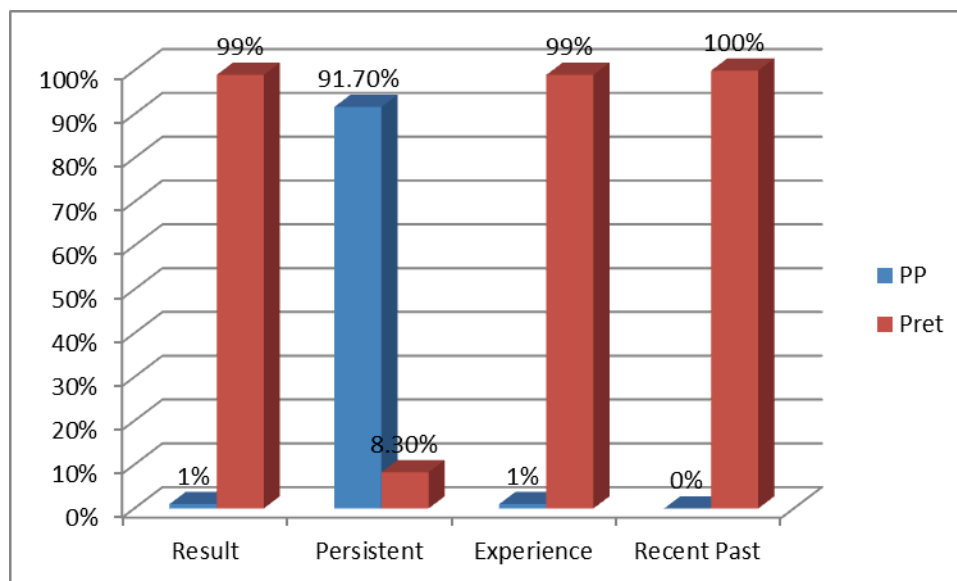
Factor groups	Factor	Weight	N
Type of perfect	Result	0.29	1/97 (1%)
	Persistent	0.995	143/156 (91.7%)
	Experience	0.25	6/631 (1%)
	Recent past*	-	0/8 (0%)
Range	75		
Duration	Punctual	0.184	5/506 (1%)
	Durative	0.876	145/368 (37.6%)
Range	69		
Telicity	Telic	0.785	79/517 (15.3%)
	Atelic	0.143	71/375 (18.9%)
Range	64		

\*The recent past perfect did not show any variation, thus it was discarded from the statistical analysis

These results show that the PRET is the preferred marker in the Caribbean (83.20%). However, the PP was used in the perfect of persistent situation context. We also noted that the PP was used in durative events, while the PRET was used in punctual events.

Table 4 also shows the weight and frequencies of the types of perfect. It's noted that the PP is favored in the perfect of persistent situations with a factor weight of .995. This means that this type of perfect favors almost exclusively the use of the PP. On the other hand, the PP was highly disfavored in all other types of perfect. Interestingly, the

recent perfect did not show any variation, all of the speakers chose to use the PRET in this context. This means that Caribbean speakers use the PRET with the perfect of experience (99%) and result (99%), while speakers used the PP with perfect persistent situations (91.7%). Figure 2 shows this distribution.



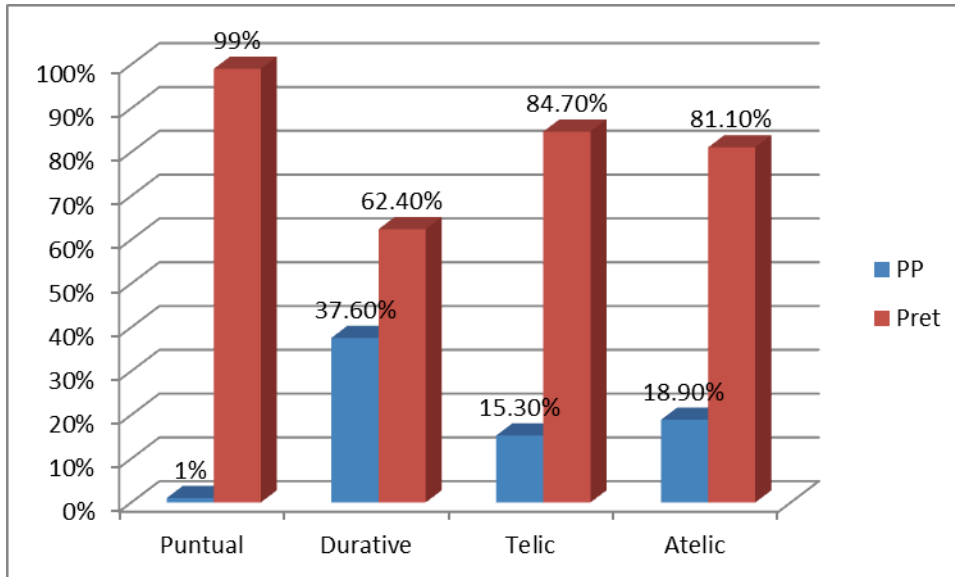
**Figure 2. Distribution of the past tense according to the perfect type**

The telicity and duration variables were both significant. The PP was favored with durative events with a weight of 0.876 (16). However, the analysis showed that there was a high frequency of punctual verbs in the PRET (99%) (17a), as well as a high frequency of the PRET in durative events (62.40%) (17b). This shows that both the PP and PRET can be used in a durative context, but the PP turns up in durative contexts almost categorically.

- (16) Yo *he ido* tanto a Chili's (DWB0014)  
 PRO have go-PP so much PREP Chili's  
 'I have been to Chili's many times.'
- (17) a. [...]*y entonces, pues, trabajé* en construcción[...] (SJ2513H96)  
 and then well work-PRET in construction  
 '[...]and then, well, I worked in construction.'
- b. *Abandoné los estudios para dedicar-me al negocio.* (DWB0014)  
 abandon-PRET the studies to dedicate-PRO to the business  
 'I left my studies to devote myself to my business.'

Similarly, telicity is significant according to the statistical analysis. Telic events favored the use of the PP with a weight of 0.785, while the atelic events disfavored the use of the PP with a weight of 0.143. The frequency of the PRET — (84.7%) — was greater with telic predicates. It would seem that the frequency of the PRET with the atelic predicates (81.1%) is approaching that of the telic predicates (Figure 3). In (18), there is a PP in a telic event, while (19) exemplifies a PRET in an atelic predicate.

- (18) no lo he sembrado nunca[...] (DWA0012)  
 NEG PRO have harvest-PP never  
 ‘I have never harvested that [...]’
- (19) Tuvo un matrimonio anterior[...] (DW C 0028)  
 have-PRET DET marriage previous  
 ‘He/She had a previous marriage.’



**Figure 3. Distribution of the past tense according to telicity and duration**

Another analysis was conducted to determine which extra-linguistics factors were significant. In order to do this, another Valbrul run was done without the linguistic variables. The results of this analysis are included in Table 5.

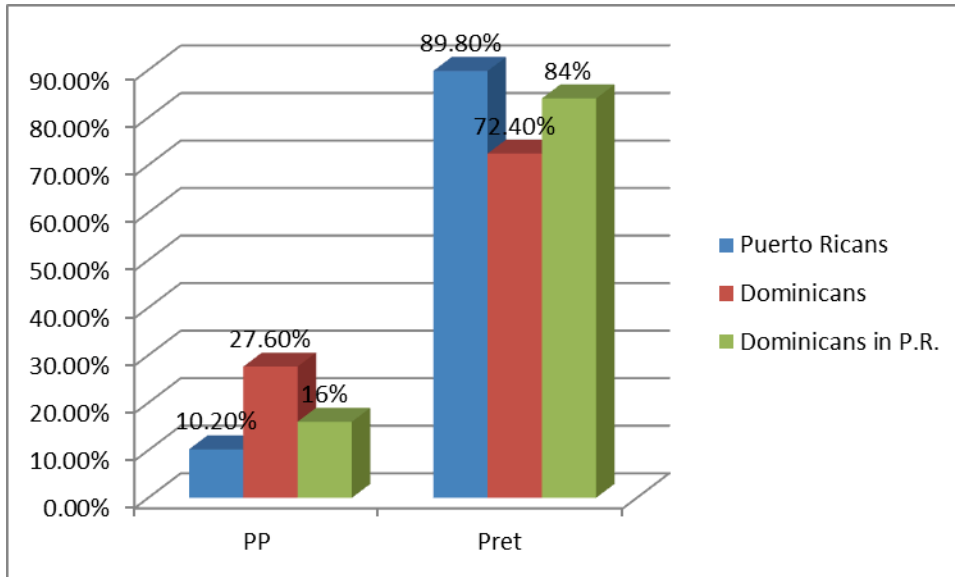
Table 5

*Distribution of significant factors affecting the PRET and the PP*

Factor groups	Factor	Weight	N
Dialect	Puerto Rican	0.369	37/362 (10.2%)
	Dominicans in DR	0.703	67/243 (27.6%)
	Dominicans in PR	0.488	46/287 (16%)
Range	33		
Gender	Male	0.596	92/451 (20.4%)
	Female	0.402	58/441 (13.2%)
Range	19		

According to the results in Table 5, the significant extra-linguistic variables are gender and dialect. Regarding the dialectal factor, the analysis indicates that Dominicans that live in the Dominican Republic favor the use of the PP (0.703). On the contrary, Puerto Ricans disfavored the use of the PP with a weight of .0369. Interestingly, Dominicans living in Puerto Rico tend to use the PP with smaller frequency (16%) than Dominicans

living in the Dominican Republic. The graph in Figure 4 exemplifies this distribution. It indicates that Puerto Ricans show greater frequency of PP (10.2%) tokens than Dominicans (27.6%); while Dominicans in Puerto Rico seem to have similar frequency of use of the PP as Puerto Ricans (16%). The same applies to the PRET. This indicates the effect of contact on these dialects.



**Figure 4. Distribution of the past tense according to telicity and duration**

Regarding the gender factor, males favored the use of the PP with a weight of 0.596. Females, on the other hand, do not appear to favor or disfavor the PP because they had a weight of 0.402. This finding was unexpected because we did not predict that gender would be significant. However, we do not have sufficient data to reach a conclusion regarding this variable. More research on the effect of gender is needed.

## 8.0 Discussion and conclusion

To summarize, we analyzed the use of the PRET and PP in Caribbean Spanish. We described the variables that affect the use of each form. With the data obtained in this research, we can argue that, in Caribbean Spanish, the PP is not on the pathway to grammaticalization. We found a high frequency of the PRET, as predicted on H1, and we also discovered that the PP is restricted to specific contexts which are the perfect of persistent situations, durative and telic events, as stated in H2 and H3. However, we did not expect telic events to favor the use of the PP. This indicates that Caribbean Spanish tends to focus more on aspect rather than tense. If this were not the case, we would have found a higher frequency of the PP with the perfect of recent past. In addition, we did not find that the PP is related to temporal reference; the Valbrul analysis discarded this factor as being significant. This finding is similar to that of Howe and Schwenter (2008). They ascribed this finding to the grammaticalization of the PP in that variety. Conversely, the PP is closely linked to durative events (Figure 3). This leads us to believe that the distinction between the PRET and the PP lies in the duration of the event. The PRET is used with punctual events while the PP is used with durative events. However, we recommend further research to support this claim.

Furthermore, we think that in Caribbean Spanish the PRET is on the pathway to grammaticalization because it is moving to semantic areas of the PP. It has started to move to durative events and to the perfect of recent past. These findings do not support the statements by Hernández (2008) and Howe and Schwenter (2008). They argued that the grammaticalization of the PP is a universal process; however, they focus on the Peninsular and American varieties of Spanish. Our data do not support their hypotheses because we did not find any evidence that indicates that there is a grammaticalization of the PP. The data we found are similar to that of Rodríguez Louro (2009). She found a high frequency of the PRET in Argentina.

Additionally, we found evidence that supports a contact effect between Dominican and Puerto Rican Spanish. The data show that Puerto Ricans have the lowest frequency of the PP, while Dominicans have the highest. However, Dominicans living in Puerto Rico have a lower frequency of PP than Dominicans living in the Dominican Republic. This indicates that Dominicans living in Puerto Rico accommodate linguistically to Puerto Rican Spanish. This could respond to negative attitudes toward Dominican Spanish in Puerto Rico. Nonetheless, it is necessary to conduct an attitudinal investigation to support this claim.

We need to conduct additional research because there are questions that still need an answer. Therefore, we recommend the following: (a) to gather data on H4 because we found few cases of temporal adverbs in the corpus; (b) to analyze why the PP was preferred with telic events; (c) to investigate if Cuban Spanish shows the same features as Dominican and Puerto Rican Spanish; (d) to complete a diachronic analysis to study PP movement; (e) to explain why women use the PP with higher frequency of PP than men.

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<sup>2</sup>We used data collected by Ana Marchena for the speakers from the Dominican Republic. As for the Dominicans living in Puerto Rico, we used the interviews conducted by Ruth Quiñones and Lizzet Castro.

<sup>3</sup>Comité Institucional para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación (CIPSHI) (Institutional Committee for the Protection of Human Beings in Research).



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