

A FORMAL ACCOUNT OF THE DIACHRONY OF THE ICELANDIC "FINISH" PERFECT

Overview Modern Icelandic has two perfect constructions: *hafa* ‘have’ and *búinn* (cf. Thráinsson 2017). The expression of all three primary perfect readings with *hafa* (experiential, resultative, universal, cf. McCawley 1971) is found in the earliest Icelandic sources (Nygaard 1905; Pollak 1930). The lexical item *búinn* exists with the meaning ‘ready/prepared/finished/complete’ in older stages of Icelandic but does not acquire an anterior, aspectual meaning until the 17th century. The utterances in (1) are typical for present-day Icelandic. While I have provided one translation for both expressions, *búinn* and *hafa*, the distribution of the former is more restricted in that an experiential reading (M. has the experience of baking a cake previously) is ruled out. Both can receive resultative (there is a cake at speech time) and universal readings (*being sick* holds at speech time).

- (1) a. María er búin að baka köku. / María hefur bakað köku.
 María is BÚINN to bake a.cake. / María has baked a.cake.
 María has baked a cake.
- b. María er búin að vera veik. / María hefur verið veik.
 María is BÚINN to be sick. / María has been sick.
 María has been sick. (Jónsson 1992)

In this paper, I provide a formal account of the trajectory of *búinn*, from an adjectival participle to a resultant state perfect marker (Larsson 2008), based on data from the Icelandic historical corpus (IcePAHC; Wallenberg et al. 2011). **Stative origins** I build upon Condoravdi and Deo’s (2014) formal account of the trajectory of resultative perfects and propose an extension for ‘finish’ perfects. Like Indo-Aryan *-ta* (ibid.), *búinn*, in its earliest historical stages involves a stative meaning component. The example in (2) (13th century) displays the ‘prepared’ reading. An anterior reading is clearly not possible.

- (2) En er Egill var búinn og byr gaf þá siglar hann í haf.
 And when Egill was BÚINN and wind gave then sails he to sea
 And when Egill was prepared and there was wind, he sailed to sea. (1250.THETUBROT.NAR-SAG,.74)

I provide the main compositional ingredients for this earliest stage of *búinn* as an adjectival participle below. The root *búa* is a predicate of *prepare* events. Participial morphology (*-inn*) suppresses the initiator argument and is exponed by an Asp head, which intervenes between the root and the Adjectival Phrase (Gehrke 2015). A predicative head then merges with AP (the function in 3b) and applies it to the subject (Meltzer-Asscher 2012).

- (3) a. $[[\sqrt{búa}]]^{w,g} = \lambda y \lambda x \lambda s \lambda e \exists e' \text{ prepare}(e')(e) \wedge \text{BECOME}(s)(e) \wedge \text{prepared}(y, s) \wedge \text{initiator}(x, e)$
 b. $[[búinn]]^{w,g} = \lambda y \lambda s \exists e, e', x \text{ prepare}(e')(e) \wedge \text{BECOME}(s)(e) \wedge \text{prepared}(y, s) \wedge \text{initiator}(x, e)$

What about the ‘finish’ reading? My claim is that this reading comes about as a result of the underspecification of *búinn*. The way in which *preparedness* is resolved is highly context dependent (it exhibits type coercion; Pustejovsky 1995).¹ Similar underspecification can be found in typologically diverse languages (Mainland Scandinavian *ferdig*, Finnish *valmis*). This is illustrated for historical Icelandic in (4) (14th century) where a net ready for fishing implies a complete net.

- (4) Ok er búíð var netit, þá fara Æsir til árinna ok kasta neti í forsinna
 And when BÚINN was the.net, then go Æsir to the.river and throw net into the.waterfall
 And when the net was finished, the Æsir went to the river and threw the net into the waterfall.
 (ONP, Jónsson 1931: 69, English from Faulkes 1987)

Emergence of anterior ‘Prepared’ and ‘finished’ both persist as meanings associated with *búinn* long after the anterior meaning emerges (‘prepared’ is typically *tilbúinn* in the modern language). However, the most prominent use of *búinn* in present-day Icelandic is aspectual, as illustrated in (1). My account of the trajectory from ‘prepared/finished’ to an anterior involves the semanticization of an IMMINENCE inference (Eckardt 2006). I argue that this inference is a conventional implicature that is a consequence of the lexical semantics of *búinn*: declaring that one is in a prepared or finished state has consequences for *what can happen now* (cf. Wide 2002). This proposal is similar to Eckardt’s (2006) for English *going to*, though the incorporation of the IMMINENCE component results in prospectivity in that instance,

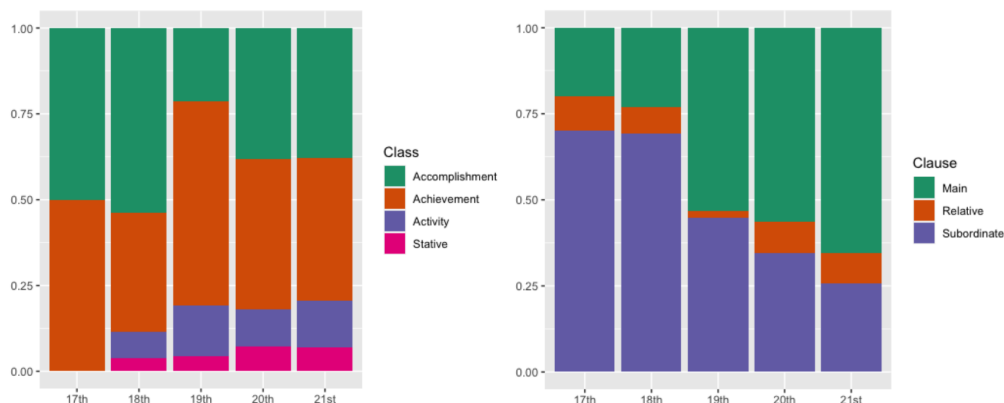
¹The event variable e' above in (3a) has to be saturated by means of an inferential mechanism.

rather than anteriority here. Furthermore, I substantiate an analysis whereby key observations from the corpus can be explained. These observations are threefold. **(i)** There is an association between early anterior readings and the presence of infinitival complements, beginning in the 17th century. Infinitival complements are rare, though not entirely ruled out prior to this stage. **(ii)** Early *búinn* anteriors occur predominantly in (temporal) subordinate contexts (Fig 1, right). **(iii)** Early anterior *búinn* predominantly co-occurs with animate, agentive subjects and telic, transitive predicates. All 17th century tokens are telic (Fig 1, left). States and activities are present under *búinn* from the 18th century onwards. An early, prototypical anterior reading of *búinn* is shown in (5), from the 17th century. Here, the ‘prepared’ reading is unambiguously contextually unavailable.

- (5) þá búidd var að brenna, féll í ösku
 when BÚINN was to burn, fell in ashes
 When one had burned it, it fell to ashes (1680.SKALHOLT.NAR-REL,.94)

My proposal crucially rests on the observation that pluperfect (in Reichenbach’s 1947 terms, E-R-S) contexts are the locus of entrenchment for the use of *búinn* as an anterior. In such a context, it would typically be uninformative to overtly express the event description for which one is preparing (# When Egill was prepared to sail, he set sail). Innovative speakers took advantage of the underspecification of *búinn* and metaphorical extensions to ‘completeness’, as well as analogy with related expressions (e.g. *að svo búnu* lit. ‘prepared/made/finished in such a way’, typically meaning ‘with things as they stand, now’) and began to combine *búinn* with infinitival complements in such contexts, presumably to mark the target state (Kratzer 2000) of the event associated with it as informative (cf. Rosemeyer and Grossman 2017). Hearers are then forced to accommodate the use of a more marked expression, where a pluperfect with *hafa* (+past tense marking) would have sufficed (by means of Eckardt’s 2009 Avoid Pragmatic Overload principle). The prevalence of *búinn* with an infinitive in such contexts provided a framework for the sort of reanalysis made possible: instead of merely being interpreted as a lexical stative, the hearer can reason that what is relevant is the temporal interval associated with the target state of the event described by the infinitive, which brings about a new state of affairs. In other words, *búinn* gets reinterpreted as aspectual, marking anterior reference. The agentivity restriction mentioned above falls out from the lexical semantics of *búinn*, as the act of preparation requires agentive intention. Moreover, the restriction to telic transitives can be accounted for as a consequence of the requirement that target state participles involve a change of state (Wegner 2019). **Reanalysis and expansion** On the analysis in Condoravdi and Deo (2014:17-19), resultative perfects combine with Paired Property Instantiations (*INST*²) which are saturated eventive and stative predications. *INST*² thus holds between an eventive-stative pair ⟨P, Q⟩ and an interval *i* iff there is an event *P* and a state *s* of type Q s.t. *s* stands in a *result* relation with *e* and *i* is in the span of *s*. I propose that resultative readings under *búinn* became licit once a reanalysis had taken place from an adjectival meaning, corresponding to the stative component of this paired denotation, to an aspectual marker which combines with such a pair and yields the *temporal correlate* of *Q*. Combination with atelic eventualities became available once the resultative entailment became conventionalized (cf. *ibid.*), from the 18th century onwards. **Outlook** My analysis demonstrates that the semanticization of an imminence inference can have different surface reflexes. I will discuss other comparable examples, such as Lithuanian *baigti*, which can have completive and prospective/proximative readings (resembling *going to*) (Holvoet 2014).

Figure 1: **Left:** Prop. of lexical aspect by period, **Right:** Prop. of clause type by period



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