Abstract

FLOYD, JEANNE-MARIE NICOLE MORLIER. Common Irregularity: Comparative Analysis of the Use of Irregular Verb Forms Across Vernacular Dialects. (Under the direction of Walt Wolfram, William C. Friday Distinguished Professor.)

While a speech community can draw the attention of linguistic scholars because of a single or small amount of unique dialect features, the occurrence of shared features across many dialects is equally noteworthy. Shared features can generally be tied back to two scenarios: (1) traceable, historical connections that exist between the dialects, or, where no direct connection can be found, (2) a universal process within the language that creates parallel structures.

The primary focus of this study is the second of these two scenarios as no direct connection can be made between the dialects examined; knowing the historical development of the parent language is crucial to understanding how dialects that are isolated from each other have come to evolve parallel patterns of behavior.

This study examines the behavior of three highly irregular, strong verbs (*come*, *be*, and *do*) across five English dialects (Beech Bottom, NC; Princeville, NC; Robeson County, NC; Abaco, Bahamas; and Tristan da Cunha). Of particular interest is the fact that these three verbs all exhibit the use of the past participle in place of the simple past tense, in the absence of an auxiliary. The dialects examined in this study were chosen for their particularly vernacular qualities, which result in great part from the extreme social, historical, and geographical isolation that has shaped these speech communities.

The shared behavior of *come*, *be*, and *do* (the past participles for each and the environments in which each were observed), indicates that like all English verbs, these three have been and continue to undergo movement from strong to weak formations, from a greater variety of inflection and change in the core vowel to greatly reduced

inflectional markers within the verbs themselves. Tracking how these three verbs have behaved in Old, Middle, and Modern English (Standard and the five vernacular varieties) reveals not only the historic movement away from an inflected past tense formation with the addition of an auxiliary, but continuing that movement to eliminate even the inflected auxiliary (either completely or reducing it to a cliticized form). The result is a completely weakened past tense form that consists of an orphaned past participle functioning solely as the simple past tense verb form.

Auxiliary use as it changed historically is also examined to show how the role of auxiliaries in conjunction with verbs moving toward weak formations has shifted over time to place the burden of inflection almost entirely on the auxiliary rather than the main verb itself. In particular auxiliary *do* is given as an example as several studies have looked at how usage of this verb has increased over time, both in response to the strong-to-weak movement and as a product of the influence of non-native (L2) English speakers. *Have* is also given as an example to show how it was historically the auxiliary of choice, especially with *be*, in support of the current study's data, which shows evidence of deleted *have/had*.

Finally, the example of deletion of the auxiliary within negative sentence constructions, following historical insertion of the negative marker, is provided to show a parallel development in auxiliary insertion followed by deletion. In both the negative constructions and in the auxiliary deletion observed in this study, the environments represent movement toward a highly weakened state in which even the auxiliary (itself a mechanism of weakening) has been removed to continue the overall shift toward weaker constructions.

Common Irregularity: Comparative Analysis of the Use of Irregular Verb Forms Across Vernacular Dialects

by

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For my husband, who supported me through all the late night classes, indulged my need to discuss everything I learned, and patiently, tirelessly cheered me on to this great success.

Biography

Jeanne-Marie Floyd was born Jeanne-Marie Morlier in Houston, Texas on Groundhog's Day in 1978. An unusual name, a notable birthday (and subsequent nickname), and non-standard, curly hair has made for an interesting life of coming to realize that uniqueness is one of God's greatest blessings. Living in North Carolina with parents who retained strong dialect ties to their native New Orleans, Louisiana, Jeanne-Marie grew up fascinated (and at times embarrassed) by her parents' "Nawlins-isms". However, it was not until much later that she would be introduced to the field entirely devoted to dialect studies, Linguistics. Jeanne-Marie graduated NC State University in 2001 with a BA in English, minor in Zoology. She accepted a position as an editor and course designer following graduation and quickly decided that this was not her lifetime calling (though it has paid the bills--and her way through graduate school--for the past five years). In 2003, she married her best friend from college and, with his undying encouragement, returned to NC State to pursue a Masters degree in English with a focus in Linguistics. Jeanne-Marie hopes to encourage others to embrace their uniqueness in language and in life by pursuing a career in teaching. She also looks forward to continuing her cultural and language education in a new direction as she and her husband welcome their first born in 2007 and later explore the world of international adoption in the years to come.

Acknowledgements

Having kept one foot in corporate America and one in academia throughout my graduate studies, I found my times on campus to be a bit like stepping through the looking glass. The classes, atmosphere, and people I joined two or three times a week were all a world apart from the working world I was escaping. I was challenged to stretch my mind and push myself, but I was also rewarded by being introduced to some truly amazing, talented, and brilliant scholars. I have been privileged and am grateful to have worked with and learned from Dr. Walt Wolfram, Dr. Erik Thomas, Dr. Charlotte Gross, Dr. Robert Young, and Dr. Michael Adams. All were eager to pour out their incredible knowledge, generous support, and boundless encouragement. I am also grateful to my fellow students for the struggles and triumphs we were able to share. Finally, and above all, I thank my husband, my family, and my friends for their endless prodding, pushing, and cheering. I truly would not have survived the long days of work followed by class and the stress of overlapping work and school deadlines without having them to complain to.

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1 Introduction

The focus of many linguistic studies is to isolate and analyze a single feature or small set of features that help to characterize a dialect as unique. A dialect's unique features set it apart in much the same way its community of speakers is set apart from other communities. Both have a cultural origin and historical background that shapes them and yet is also shaped by them. Understanding the features that help to make a dialect and the people who speak it unique strengthens a community's sense of identity and legitimizes its existence and need for preservation.

For all the noteworthy differences that set one dialect uniquely apart from another, however, it is also possible to observe some features that are shared across dialects. Causes for shared features can be summed up in two possible scenarios:

(1) Traceable, historical connections exist between the dialects (e.g., contact between members of the dialect communities took place).

Or, where no direct connection can be found:

(2) A universal process is taking place within the language that creates parallel structures.

Scenario (2) is the primary focus of this study as no direct connection can be made between the dialects examined. The historical development of the parent language is crucial to understanding the common denominator that allows dialects that are isolated from each other to evolve parallel patterns of behavior.

This study examines the behavior of three verbs (*come*, *be*, and *do*) across five English dialects. The three verbs being observed are highly irregular, strong verbs. In particular, these three verbs all exhibit the use of the past participle in place of the simple past tense and in the absence of an auxiliary that would normally accompany the past

participle. For example, rather than saying, "I have been here for thirty years," a speaker in one of the speech communities studied might say, "I been here for thirty years." Likewise, instead of saying, "the water came up to here" a speaker from one of these communities might say, "the water come up to here." In addition, as strong verbs, *come*, *be*, and *do* are subject to the trend of growing pressure for English strong verbs to become more like weak verbs. In general, this trend "encourages" verbs with a fluctuating core vowel (e.g., *plead/pled*) to take on fewer inflectional forms to indicate changes in tense (e.g., *plead/pleaded*).

Because the dialects being examined stem from such diverse historical backgrounds, this analysis seeks to determine how and why these three verbs came to behave the same way. What factors and trends were already in place in the English language historically that allowed these verbs to develop identical behaviors in very different, and often very isolated, dialect environments? Why did the environmental and historical factors that shaped these dialects not also cause these verbs to develop differently? Is there evidence of other, similar developments in the English language that also span multiple dialects?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to examine the behavior of *come*, *be*, and *do* not only within the five dialects, but within the greater context of the English language as it has developed historically from Old, to Middle, to Modern. It is also necessary to examine parallel developments (as a basis for comparison) that demonstrate how similar influential circumstances have resulted in other developments in the history of the English language that apply across multiple dialect communities.

2 Sociohistorical Context

2.1 Study Sites

This study utilizes samples from five language communities: Beech Bottom, NC; Princeville, NC; Robeson County, NC; Abaco, Bahamas; and Tristan da Cunha. These five language communities were selected for their particularly vernacular English qualities. The three dialects from North Carolina represent three major ethnic groups: Caucasian, African American, and Lumbee (Native American). The Abaco, Bahamas and the Tristan da Cunha dialects represent non-American varieties of English. This section will provide a brief overview of the sociohistorical backgrounds for these five speech communities.

2.1.1 North Carolina Speech Communities

Figure 2.1 shows the three North Carolina study sites chosen for this study: Beech Bottom, Robeson County, and Princeville.
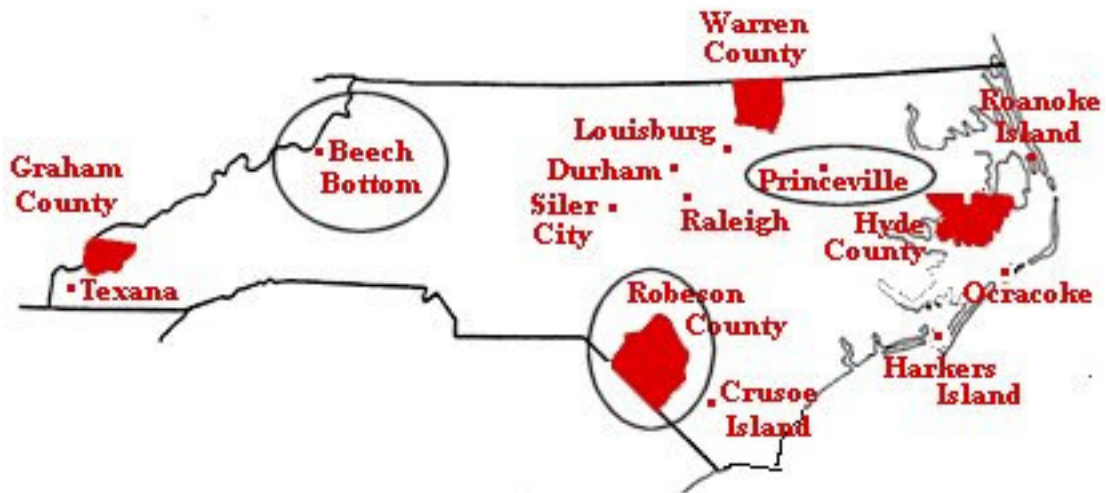
Figure 2.1: Speech Communities Used in North Carolina

2.1.1.1 Beech Bottom, NC

Beech Bottom is a community in northwestern North Carolina, about 35 miles southwest of Boone. Beech Bottom was settled in the 1870s and from 1900 to 1940, had a population ranging from 80 to 110 people, including African American, Anglo American, and Native American residents. The current population, however, is only about ten residents due to the closing of feldspar mines and the impact of World War II in the early 1940s.[1]

Beech Bottom is notable linguistically because all of its residents (Anglo American, Native American, and African American alike) have adapted their linguistic features to match those of the localized Appalachian English dialect. It was these Appalachian English features that were of greatest interest for the purposes of this study.

2.1.1.2 Princeville, NC

Princeville is located in the Coastal Plain region of eastern North Carolina, just south of the Tar River in Edgecombe County. It is the oldest incorporated Black town in the United States and was settled just after the Civil War in 1865. Originally called "Freedom Hill," this community was renamed Princeville when it became officially incorporated in 1885, in honor of Turner Prince, a former slave who used his skills as a carpenter to help build the free community.[2]

Princeville continues to exist as a symbol of self-sufficiency, survival, solidarity, and pride. The town has endured racial, social, economic, and environmental challenges throughout its existence. The African American residents of Princeville hold an

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[1] This information provided from the North Carolina Language and Life Project online resource.
[2] This information provided from the North Carolina Language and Life Project online resource.

overwhelming majority (98 percent of its approximately 2,100 residents), and are singularly aware and proud of their important place in African American history in the United States.

Princeville was chosen for this study as an ideal representative of an African American speech community within North Carolina.

2.1.1.3 Robeson County, NC

Robeson County is a tri-ethnic community consisting of Native Americans, African Americans, and Anglo Americans. Historical accounts record that early Anglo settlers from the Scottish Highlands found the Native-American group, the Lumbee, speaking English when they arrived in Robeson County in the 1730s. Robeson County was also home to a group of African Americans, including both runaway and free slaves.

Historically a farming community that produced tobacco, cotton, and corn, Robeson County is moving away from agriculture into other businesses and is also home to the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, originally an Indian normal school in the late 19th century.[3]

This study focuses on the Lumbee speech community of Robeson County.

2.1.2 Non-American Speech Communities

The following two non-American speech communities of Abaco, Bahamas and Tristan da Cunha were chosen as a basis for comparison with the American speech communities in this study. Since this study proposes parallel structures among the variables being examined created by a universal feature of the language as a whole (that is, that the

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[3] This information provided from the North Carolina Language and Life Project online resource.

variables appear across the English language as a whole), it is important to demonstrate that these variables appear in both American and non-American based dialects of English.

2.1.2.1 Abaco, Bahamas

Figure 2.2: Cherokee Sound, Abaco, Bahamas

The history of Abaco really begins with the end of the American Revolutionary War. At that time 2,500 British Loyalists and 4,000 slaves fled to the islands. Among these were a group from the Carolinas, who went first to Florida, then continued to Abaco where they settled the Cherokee Sound peninsula.

The Anglo-American community of Cherokee Sound remains highly isolated, with only about 160 residents. Though records such as journals and personal communications that might tell the real history of the people of Cherokee sound are scarce (aside from records for marriages, births, deaths, etc.), one particular document of interest survives. Following a severe storm in 1822, the residents of Cherokee sound signed a petition to the British

Parliament asking for financial assistance. The names on the petition included Albury, Bethel, Johnson, Pinder, Roberts, Russell, Sands, Sawyer and Sweeting. All but two of these families still reside in Cherokee today.

This study focused on the Cherokee Sound speech community because of its isolated nature among majority Black communities of the Bahamas, and because of its ties to the Carolinas.

2.1.2.2 Tristan da Cunha
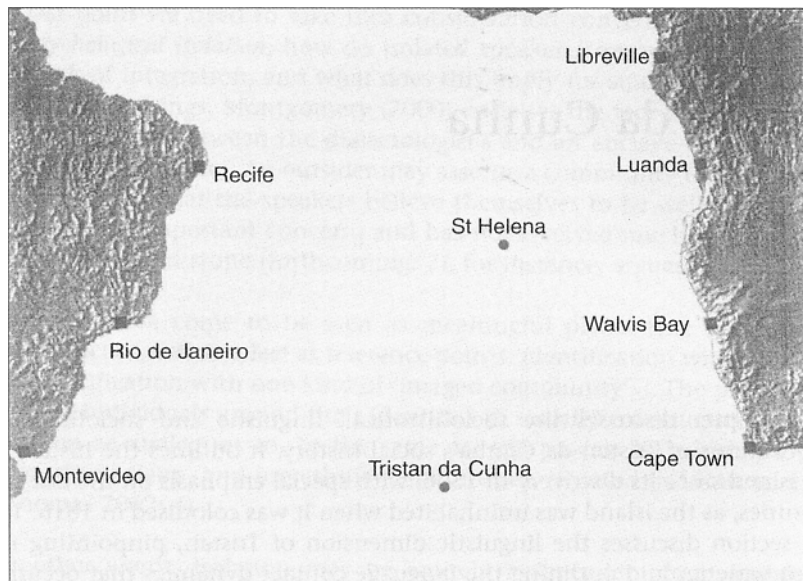
Figure 2.3 Tristan da Cunha

Tristan da Cunha is a territory made up of four islands: Gough, Inaccessible, Nightingale, and Tristan da Cunha. Tristan da Cunha island is the main island in the group and the only one with a permanent population. Tristan da Cunha was first discovered in 1506 by a Portuguese admiral named Tristão da Cunha. It received mostly Dutch attention in the 17th century, and eventually in the 19th century, Britain set up a military garrison on Tristan da Cunha. The garrison gave way to early civilian settlements in 1817. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw periods of extreme isolation for Tristan da Cunha followed by growth. In

1942, Britain established a naval station on the island, which brought significant modernization, including radio, electricity, running water, and a stable currency-based economy. The eruption of the volcano on Tristan da Cunha in 1961 caused an evacuation of the island's inhabitants to England for two years. They returned beginning in 1963 to rebuild their community and way of life almost completely from the ground up.

Today, Tristan da Cunha is a thriving, prosperous community. The lack of indigenous peoples on the island during its earliest settlements, along with long periods of isolation from the outside world, have forged a truly unique dialect of Southern Hemisphere English.

3 Methodology

3.1 Sampling

The speech samples analyzed in this study come from tape-recorded sociolinguistic interviews that are part of the larger collection of recorded interviews in the North Carolina Language and Life Project (NCLLP) as well as collected recordings from Dr. Daniel Schreier from his study of Tristan da Cunha. The recordings represent speech collected primarily by allowing the speakers to comment on subjects of their choice, but also focused on creating an oral history with older interviewees.

Five representative speakers were selected from each of the five communities for a total of 25 speech samples. Samples for each speaker totaled 20 to 25 minutes in length. While age and speech community for each speaker were noted for this study, other factors such as ethnicity and sex were not. However, the five communities in this study were selected for their particularly vernacular speech qualities and uniqueness (often related to their isolation—social, geographical, or both). Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show the age distribution for the speech samples in each community.

Table 3.1: Age Distribution for American Speech Communities

Community	Age of Speakers
Beech Bottom, NC	72
	62
	55
	35
	25
Princeville, NC	83
	79
	76
	74
	39
Robeson County, NC	97
	91
	71
	70
	56

Table 3.2: Age Distribution for Non-American Speech Communities

Community	Age of Speakers
Cherokee Sound, Abaco, Bahamas	85
	80
	79
	57
	27
Tristan da Cunha	77
	65
	59
	32
	21

While a few younger generation speakers were sampled in most of the communities, the majority of speakers selected were over the age of 60. This was done to maximize the amount of tokens observed, which can decrease with younger generations due to the effects of micro-variables, such as economic pressure to work outside the community and increasing access to and influence of technology, especially telecommunications technology (Wolfram 2004).

3.2 Data

Each speech sample was analyzed for occurrences of three tokens: *come*, *been*, and *done*. The environments for the occurrences of these verbs were also recorded and analyzed for comparison across the five speech communities. Tables 3.3 through 3.5 show examples for each token, from each community, along with brief comments on the behavior of the token in the example environment. (Note: tables showing all tokens collected are provided in the Appendix.)

Table 3.3: Example of *Been* for Each Sample Community

Been		
Community	**Environment**	**Notes**
Princeville, NC	…the town always **been** known as a flooded area.	Deletion of auxiliary *has*
Beech Bottom, NC	**There's been** fellers come in here	*There's*, showing cliticized remnant of *has*
Robeson County, NC	And I **been** here ever since.	Deletion of auxiliary *have*
Abaco, Bahamas	You **been** in the store?	Deletion of auxiliary *have*
Tristan da Cunha	Oh, I **been** aboard a lot of them.	Deletion of auxiliary *have*

Table 3.4: Example of *Done* for Each Sample Community

Done		
Community	**Environment**	**Notes**
Princeville, NC	And that's exactly what I **done**	Use of *done* in place of *did*
Beech Bottom, NC	I **done** it for thirty years	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
Robeson County, NC	And, uh, I **done** very good up until uh this past August.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
Abaco, Bahamas	I **done** some farming, we done farming	Deletion of auxiliary *have*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
Tristan da Cunha	the people **done** away with theys dogs before they left	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *done* in place of *did*

Table 3.5: Example of *Come* for Each Sample Community

Come		
Community	**Environment**	**Notes**
Princeville, NC	it **come** up here mostly late in the evening	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
Beech Bottom, NC	…you took some to the mill and you ground it, **come** back home, put baking soda in it, fixed it…	Use of *come* in place of *came*
Robeson County, NC	He heared that I had lost my husband and he **come** out to see what he could do…	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
Abaco, Bahamas	Now they tell me **MacDonald's come** from England	Use of cliticized *has* on *MacDonald's*
Tristan da Cunha	When administrators **come** to the island, you see, they took over.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*

Once all tokens were noted, several common environments for occurrence were observed:

(1) Token replaced simple past tense form; past perfect was not possible in this environment.

(2) Token functioning as the past participle, with clear deletion of auxiliary; past perfect was possible and appropriate in this environment.

(3) Deletion of auxiliary was not clearly evident; token could be exhibiting 1 or 2.

(4a) Token was present with auxiliary.

(4b) Token was present with remnant/cliticized form of auxiliary.

(5) Token exhibited other use (e.g. completive *done*, in subjunctive construction with modals, etc.).

The distinction between 1 and 2 is particularly crucial. If a token was observed in environment (1), it was functioning as the simple past tense marker solely. If a token was observed in environment (2), however, it was functioning as a past participle, in the past perfect, but the auxiliary was not present. In (1) the past participle is fulfilling a role it was not meant to, while in (2) it is functioning correctly in the absence of its auxiliary.

Tables 3.6 through 3.8 show the percentages of these five environments exhibited by each token.

Table 3.6: Percent of *Been* Token Exhibited by Environment

Been	
Environment	**Percentage Exhibited**
(1) Simple past tense replaced	0%
(2) Past participle with deleted auxiliary	50%
(3) Either simple past tense replacement or past participle with deleted auxiliary	0%
(4a) Past participle with auxiliary	18%
(4b) Past participle with remnant/cliticized form of auxiliary	32%
(5) Other	0%

Table 3.7: Percent of *Done* Token Exhibited by Environment

Done	
Environment	**Percentage Exhibited**
(1) Simple past tense replaced	20%
(2) Past participle with deleted auxiliary	0%
(3) Either simple past tense replacement or past participle with deleted auxiliary	67%
(4a) Past participle with auxiliary	0%
(4b) Past participle with remnant/cliticized form of auxiliary	0%
(5) Other	13%

Table 3.8: Percent of *Come* Token Exhibited by Environment

Come	
Environment	**Percentage Exhibited**
(1) Simple past tense replaced	38%
(2) Past participle with deleted auxiliary	3%
(3) Either simple past tense replacement or past participle with deleted auxiliary	50%
(4a) Past participle with auxiliary	3%
(4b) Past participle with remnant/cliticized form of auxiliary	6%
(5) Other	0%

Evidence of the past participle used with a deleted auxiliary is strongest for *been*. *Come* and *done* show the majority of their tokens falling into the "either 1 or 2" category. The significance of and explanations for these majority distributions will be discussed in greater detail in Section 4. While categories 4a and 4b are clearly the minority distributions where they occur, they are worth noting as well, as evidence of the auxiliaries presumably deleted in the majority distributions.

4 Data Analysis: Historical Comparison

The behavior of *come*, *been*, and *done* documented in this study illustrates a form of analogical change, which "involves the influence of one form or group of forms on another, causing one group of forms to become more like the other" (Tserdanelis 2004). More specifically, conforming irregular (strong) verbs to more regular (weak) verb behaviors could be described as a four-part (or proportional) analogy: x is to x' as y is to y'. This type of analogy is responsible for "the regularization of irregular past and participle verb forms [often found] in vernacular dialects" (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1998). So, for example, the past tense of *know* has been regularized to *knowed* in some vernacular dialects by analogy with *look/looked*.

In the case of *come*, *been*, and *done*, this type of regularization by analogy occurs at a much broader level, conforming the entire past tense structure (not only the designated past tense marker, but also the past participle) of strong (but particularly irregular) verbs to act like their more systematic, regular weak counterparts. The result is the use of the past participle, which much more closely resembles the infinitive (and usually the present tense) than the varied past tense of these verbs in standard form. Table 4.1 illustrates this point.

Table 4.1: Infinitive/Past Tense Pairing Comparison

Infinitive	Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle
to come	come/comes	came	come
to do	do/does	did	done
to be	am/is/are	was/were	been

To understand the cause of this cross-dialectal, analogical change impacting the past tense functionality of *come*, *been*, and *done,* it is first necessary to understand the nature of the root verbs themselves (*come*, *be*, and *do*). This section addresses the following questions in an attempt to analyze the observed data in Section 3:

- What shared characteristics have shaped the functionality of these verbs over time?

- How do these verbs form the past tense?

- How has past tense functionality changed historically?

4.1 Defining Strong and Weak Verbs

The first important characteristic shared by *come*, *been*, and *done* is that they stem from irregular, strong verbs. Most irregular verbs are a type of strong verb, though some are so irregular, they can be classified into categories of their own (most notable of these are *be* and *go*).

It is important to understand the distinction between strong and weak verbs. Strong verbs "are characterized by ablaut or gradation of the radical vowel" (Cassidy and Ringler 1971). A Modern English example is the verb *sing*, with the past tense *sang* and the past participle *sung*. Weak verbs are verbs that form the past tense and past participle by adding a morpheme containing /d/ or /t/ (Cassidy and Ringler 1971). A Modern English example of this would be the verb *look*, with the past tense of *looked*, and a past participle of *looked*. Commonly in weak verbs, the past tense and the past participle will be identical. This single past tense/past participle ending (usually spelled *–ed*) is called the productive suffix as most new verb forms take the weak *–ed* ending in Modern English rather than forming new strong verbs. "This past ending has three phonologically conditioned variants ([t], [d], and [Id]) and

represents the maintenance of the suffix used for these tenses on verbs in Old English"
(Christian, et al 1988).

In Standard English, the historical trend has been a regularization of strong verb forms to weak verb forms. For example, the verb *glide* in Old English used to be conjugated as shown in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2: Conjugation of *Glide* in Old English

Infinitive	Preterit 3rd Singular	Preterit Plural	Past Participle
glīdan	glād	glidon	gliden

In Modern English the same verb would be conjugated as shown in Table 4.3:

Table 4.3: Conjugation of *Glide* in Modern English

Infinitive	Preterit 3rd Singular	Preterit Plural	Past Participle
glide	glided	glided	glided

Table 4.4 lists some additional Old English verbs demonstrating the strong verb formation. Some of these words in Modern English remain strong, while others have become weak. It should be noted that although some verbs remained strong, their conjugations have still been greatly reduced from their Old English equivalents, indicating that the movement overall is from more inflectional, more conjugated representations of tense to fewer, less diverse representations of tense.

Table 4.4: Strong Verb Formation Examples

Infinitive (translation)	Preterit Sing.	Preterit Pl.	Past Part.	Modern English Past/Past Part.
bīdan (bide)	bād	bidon	biden	bided/bided
bītan (bite)	bāt	biton	biten	bit/bitten
rīsan (rise)	rās	rison	risen	rose/risen
wrītan (write)	wrāt	writon	writen	wrote/written

When one considers the mechanisms involved in learning language and how strong and weak verbs fit into that process, the tendency to want to weaken strong verbs makes sense. As Pinker and Prince (1988) note, "the past tense forms of strong verbs must be memorized; the past tense forms of regular verbs can be generated by rule." This makes strong verbs much more susceptible to change, that is, it seems to be easier to learn regular morphological rules than lexical-specific forms. Because of this, strong verbs are more easily deleted in usage depending on the reliability of a speaker's memory.

4.2 Shifting Role of Auxiliaries and the Past Participle

Another important characteristic shared by *come*, *been*, and *done* is that they are all the past participle forms of their respective root verbs (*come*, *be*, and *do*). In addition, these past participle forms are either being used in place of the simple past tense rather than functioning as a past participle, or they are functioning as a past participle without an

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auxiliary. The significance of the observed verb forms from this study occurring as past participles can be better understood with an explanation of past participle function in Standard English.

In addition to forming passive voice and functioning as an adjective, the past participle in Standard English functions to show an action that has been completed in the past either prior to the present (present perfect) or prior to another past action (past perfect).[4] An example of present perfect construction would be *I have finished my exam.* In this example, the auxiliary + past participle construction is represented by *have finished.* An example of past perfect would be, *I had gone to the store, then I realized I forgot my shopping list*. In this example, the auxiliary + past participle construction is represented by *had gone*. In either perfect construction, the accompanying auxiliary provides the inflection for the past participle.

Using the auxiliary + past participle construction for past tense marking continues the pattern of movement from strong to weak formation. A verb that formerly showed tense via a change in core vowel (or other prominent part of the word) now shows little change within the verb itself, relying instead on the auxiliary to show tense. The verb itself is able to remain more static (weak) in nature with a reduced number of inflectional changes, while the auxiliary takes on the burden of changing for inflection. In a language system undergoing reduction of inflectional usage, a smaller number of auxiliaries changing for tense marking would be much more acceptable than a large number of main verbs changing.

A number of studies have examined the shifting role of auxiliaries and their importance in tense marking in light of declining inflectional usage (Pollock 1989; Ellegård

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[4] The definition for present and past perfect is adapted from the Meriam-Webster Dictionary online. See References for the full citation.

1953; Chomsky 1957, 1989; Kroch 1989). These studies support the idea of a hierarchy of verb application in which three processes are observed, listed here in the order of universally preferred occurrence (Battistella 1991):

(1) Verb fronting: Proximity of the verb to its subject/object is used for indicating tense and agreement.

(2) Inflectional movement: Tense and agreement rely more on changes in inflectional endings.

(3) Auxiliary support: An inflected auxiliary is inserted to indicate tense and agreement.

Any given language may exhibit one or more than one of these processes of inflection; however, as this hierarchy applies to English, use of auxiliaries to indicate tense and agreement falls into a "last resort" category.

Between Old English and Modern English, a restructuring of the verb application hierarchy[5] took place, shifting the importance of tense marking away from inflection and toward syntax. "[T]he loss of the verbal inflectional system as a whole…led to a parametric change in the grammar whereby morphological agreement was replaced by syntactic agreement" (Nagle 1989). The emphasis on inflection of the main verb as the key indicator of tense and number became overshadowed by the indicators found in a phrase as a whole. To facilitate this change, the focus on tense marking needed to shift from the verb itself (both by its location and its inflectional markers) to an auxiliary (the last available choice in the hierarchy in the absence of verb fronting and inflectional movement).

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[5] Several scholars date this restructuring to the sixteenth century (Nagle 1989; Lightfoot 1974; Roberts 1985; Battistella 1991).

Auxiliary *do* in particular has been the subject of several auxiliary studies as an example of how auxiliary function has changed over time.[6] It is one example of how auxiliaries in general increased in usage, taking on almost every functional role of inflected main verbs between Old and Middle English, before their usage was finally reduced to their present day functionality between Late Middle English and Early Modern English. Kroch (1989) examined the use of auxiliary *do* historically and found that "the increase in *do* use proceeded at the same rate in different syntactic contexts (questions, negatives, etc.) and that *do* use is quantitatively connected to the loss of VF [verb fronting]" (Battistella 1991). In short, a restructuring took place in which auxiliaries filled a functional role to fulfill the need to weaken verbs. Examples (a) through (d) illustrate this restructuring:

(a) *Have* you the book?

(b) *Do* you *have* the book?

(c) He *went* not to the village.

(d) He *did* not *go* to the village.

In both (a) and (c), the main verb is well to the front of the sentence and in (c) the verb has also been conjugated to its strong past tense, which of course is morphologically very different from the root verb *go*. In (b) and (d), however, by using auxiliary *do/did* the main verb remains unchanged, uninflected, and weak.

Dekeyser (1992) proposed a theory for the origin of periphrastic (auxiliary) *do*, again as a model for the origin of other auxiliaries exhibiting more prominent usage. While Dekeyser affirms the origins of periphrastic *do* in written accounts from Late Middle English, he proposes that these written accounts may reflect a trickle down effect from much earlier,

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[6] It should be noted, however, that *have* and *be*, as well as modals, were already being used as auxiliaries by the time auxiliary *do* came into use.

during the years following the Norman Conquest. In Dekeyser's model, "upper and upper-middle class prestigious L2 [English as a second language] speakers…had adopted a periphrastic *do* rule, and…following their increasing integration into the English-speaking population…this rule percolated into the spoken and written language of the educated native speaker." He points to modern studies of L2 adults and children to support this possible theory as a form of hypercorrection (see examples (e) and (f) below). In essence, using *do* as an auxiliary allows the speaker to postpone or completely avoid having to select the appropriate conjugation of the verb. The L2 speaker needs to remember only the conjugation of the auxiliary *do*, for example:

     (e) [Where did you buy it?] L2 speaker: I *did buy* it in…

     (f) [How much does it cost?] L2 speaker: It *do cost* seventeen marks.

Dekeyser describes the development of periphrastic *do* as an "exaptation": a structure that arose for one function and adapted for use in another function. In essence, *do* and other auxiliaries potentially arose as a functional element for L2 speakers of English. Speakers used auxiliary *do* to weaken verbs requiring inflected endings, and make the transition from their native language (in this case French) to English easier. As the French speaking Normans integrated more into English speaking society, however, *do* began to lose its L2 functionality. It became the object of only marginal use, but eventually was reintegrated, first in interrogative (e.g., *Do you know him?)* and negative (e.g., *I do not know him.*) sentences, and finally in affirmative sentences (e.g., *I do know him.*). Dekeyser links this progression of *do* usage to certain word-order constraints that developed in which it became ungrammatical

to place the subject after the main verb and to separate an object from its main verb. Auxiliaries (such as *do*) allowed these word-order constraints to be maintained.[7]

A study conducted by Hawkins and Liszka (2003) illustrates a slightly different approach to the concept of L2 speakers weakening verbs. Though not focused on auxiliary use, their study maintains the overall premise that L2 speakers will sometimes adapt the rules of the second language, whether it is to simplify learning or to mold the second language into the rules of their primary language.

Hawkins and Liszka observed Chinese, Japanese, and German advanced L2 speakers of English to study how each group applied past tense marking on verbs (regular and irregular) in both written tests and oral recordings. They discovered that "Chinese informants do mark simple past tense optionally in oral production…but the Japanese and German speakers are significantly less likely to do so." The authors tested each group for proficiency and determined that the optional past tense marking was not a reflection of a lack of understanding. Chinese speakers were as proficient as Japanese or German participants at past tense marking for regular and irregular verbs in written tests. What the authors suggest is that for the Chinese language, there is no syntactic past tense marking feature, but rather a context-based tense marker. So for Chinese, marking a verb to indicate tense is not necessary because meaning can be derived based on context. The observed result was that Chinese speakers often used the bare root (infinitive) form for a verb rather than the inflected past tense form (e.g., *The police caught the man and **take** him away.*). On the other hand,

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[7] It should be noted that this theory of auxiliary *do* development is only one possible explanation, which is not shared by every researcher who studies this topic. Because of poor integration of the Normans with English-speaking natives, it may have been difficult for the French language to influence English the way Dekeyser has proposed.

Japanese and German, like English, do utilize a past tense marking feature on the verb. So for these languages, as with English, past tense marking is not optional for meaning.

The authors were able to rule out what they referred to as "performance pressures" as a cause for optional past tense marking in oral production tests. They observed that while past tense marking was made optional, Chinese speakers were accurate where they did use past tense marking, and successfully used more complex constructions (such as past participles) correctly. The explanation that the authors offer is that "where parametrised syntactic features are not present in the speaker's L1, they will not be accessible in later L2 acquisition." Since Chinese allows the option of not marking for tense and rather, relying on context for specific verb meaning, L2 Chinese speakers of English tend to apply this optionality to English verbs. Along these lines, where Chinese speakers did use past tense marking in oral production, the authors attribute this to the speakers "monitoring" verbs in context and assigning past tense marking based on the "pastness" of the overall discourse context.

Denison (2000) provides an interesting analysis of the use of auxiliary *have* with the verb *be*. Of particular importance in his analysis is the observation that in ambiguous past tense constructions involving both *have* and *be*, *have* is almost exclusively the auxiliary of choice to accompany the past participle. For example, in constructions such as *There's been an accident*, it is easy to discern that the cliticized *'s* on *There* comes from *has* rather than *is*. However, consider a more ambiguous construction such as *There's a man been shot*. Denison argues that here again, the cliticized *'s* is formed from *has* rather than *is*. Historically, there were restrictions on the use of double *be* constructions, so that *be* + *been* + past participle would not be grammatical. "[M]ain verb *be* has…never formed a perfect with auxiliary *be*,

but rather—since very late Old English—always with *have*." In short, in cases where a cliticized auxiliary form is present for the past perfect, it is almost certainly a cliticized form of *have*.

Another important point that Denison makes is that there is a certain order in which auxiliaries are added to a phrase, beginning with the addition of one auxiliary, up through three or more. He notes that "auxiliaries are added on at the left, at the tensed end of the verbal group" so that in a construction such as *is/was being sung*, the addition of an auxiliary would result in *has been being sung*. An alternative production might be *has been sung* developing into *has been being sung*; however, Denison argues that this is unlikely since the substitution of a past tense auxiliary phrase (*has been*) for the present or simple past tense (*is/was*) is much more logical than the insertion of a progressive participle (*being*) with a past participle (*been*). The main explanation for this conclusion is his proposed timetable for certain developmental milestones in English, shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Denison's Dates of Grammaticalization

Auxiliary	Grammaticalization
Modals and *onginnan*	Already in Old English
Perfect *have*	Already in Old English
Periphrastic *do*	Fourteenth-fifteenth centuries
Passive *be*	Fourteenth-eighteenth centuries (?)
Progressive *be*	Late eighteenth century (?)
Passive *get*	Twentieth century and continuing

In general, the earlier a development has taken place, the more likely it is to be used first to accomplish a particular functional goal. In this case, perfect *have* developed as an auxiliary prior to progressive *be*; therefore, it is more likely that the verbs were exchanged than that an additional participle was added.

In summary, the major points to remember regarding the focus verbs for this study are as follows:

- Verb application hierarchy was restructured to place emphasis on auxiliary support instead of verb fronting and inflectional movement.

- Auxiliary usage may have developed as a function of L2 users and in response to word-order constraints that arose requiring the subject to come before the main verb and an object to not be separated from its corresponding main verb.

- Perfect (present and past) almost exclusively uses *have/has* as its auxiliary, to the point that where cliticized forms of the auxiliary are used, they are almost always a form of *have*.

- Auxiliaries were added historically from the left within a phrase and developed in a particular order, some of the oldest of which were perfect *have*, periphrastic *do*, and passive *be*.

All of these developments in auxiliary usage set the stage for weakening the simple past tense by using the auxiliary + past participle construction. The remaining aspect of the occurrences of *come*, *been*, and *done* observed in the five study dialects is the deletion of this established auxiliary. Clues to the mechanism of this deletion can be found by examining how *come*, *be*, and *do* have changed between Old, Middle, and Modern English.

4.3 Variables in Context

Modern scholars of Old English (dated roughly from AD 449-1100) categorized the strong verbs into seven major classes. These classes are mostly separated based on the present tense stem vowel. For all seven classes, there are four principle parts: the infinitive, the preterit singular, the preterit plural, and the past participle (Cassidy and Ringler 1971).

The Middle English period (dated roughly from AD 1100 to 1500) saw a reduction of these four principle parts to three, in which the preterit singular and preterit plural adopted the same vowel gradation. There was also a dramatic reduction in the number of strong verbs, many becoming weak, but a large number of them disappeared from use completely.

The fourteenth century marked the peak for the strong to weak shift. Following this period, the shift continued at a much slower pace. Smith (2000) summarizes the significance of this shift when she observes, "Of approximately 360 strong verbs that existed in Old English…80 are retained in present day Standard English."

In addition to internal forces already driving English verbs from strong to weak, external forces, namely foreign occupations, were helping to push this change forward. Four

principle dialects were spoken in Anglo-Saxon England: Kentish, West Saxon, Mercian, and Northumbrian. During the ninth century, the Norse (who included Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes) began invading and occupying the four kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex, and East Anglia. While the initial goal of these invasions was largely to pillage and loot, a good deal of integration and settlement resulted. By the tenth and eleventh centuries, Norse invaders seemed much more interested in colonization, eventually settling down peaceably with the English. This integration occurred somewhat seamlessly (aside from the inherent bloodshed brought by the invasions), assisted by the similarities between Old English and Old Norse. But Old Norse did impact Old English verbs. While both Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon were Germanic in origin, Old Norse differed in its inflectional endings: namely it had fewer.

The Norman Conquest brought another significant impact to the English language. In 1066, at the Battle of Hastings, the English king, Harold, was defeated by the Normans, under the leadership of William the Conqueror. The Normans were descended from Scandinavian settlers to France (their name stemming from the Old French form of the word "Northmen"). In only five generations between the first duke of Normandy (William's great-great-great grandfather, Rollo) and William himself, the Normans had culturally and linguistically become French. With the conquest of England, the Normans continued their trend for adaptation rather than domination. While French became the language of governing classes, there was never a period in which a majority of the population spoke French. In fact, the Norman dialect adapted into its own dialect of English, called Anglo-Norman. The primary Norman contribution to English was word stock; however, the Norman influence also further encouraged two trends already taking place in English: standardization of

English word order to subject-verb-object and additional loss of inflectional endings. Both of these changes were gradual and varied from region to region, but they helped to push forward the movement from a more inflected case system to a simpler case system seen in Modern English (Mitchell and Robinson 2001).

As strong verbs, *come*, *be*, and *do* were at the heart of these drastic changes in verb function. The following sections will examine each of these verbs in more detail as they developed historically.

4.3.1 Development of *Been*

The verb *be* is formed from parts of three different Old English verbs stems: *beon*, *is*, and *wesan*. Table 4.6 shows the Old English conjugations of *beon*, *is*, and *wesan*.

Table 4.6: Old English Conjugation of *Beon*, *Is*, and *Wesan*[8]

Case	Number			Present		Preterit
Indicative	Sing.	ic:I	eom	bēo	wæs	
		þū:you, thou	eart	bist	wǣre	
		hē, hit, hēo: he, it, she	is	bið	wæs	
	Plur.	we, ge, hie: we, you, they	sind, sint, sindon	bēoð	wǣron	
Subjunctive	Sing.		sīe, sī, sēo	bēo	wǣre	
	Plur.		sīen, sīn	bēon	wǣren	
Imperative	Sing.		bēo, wes			
	Plur.		bēoð, wesað			
Participle			bēonde, wesende			

While there was a past tense in Old English (formed by *wæs*, *wǣre*, and *wǣron*), there was no past participle. It wasn't until about the twelfth century that the first documented occurrences of the *be* past participle (which notably took the *beon* form rather than either the *is* or *wesan* forms) appear in literary sources, as shown in Figure 4.1:

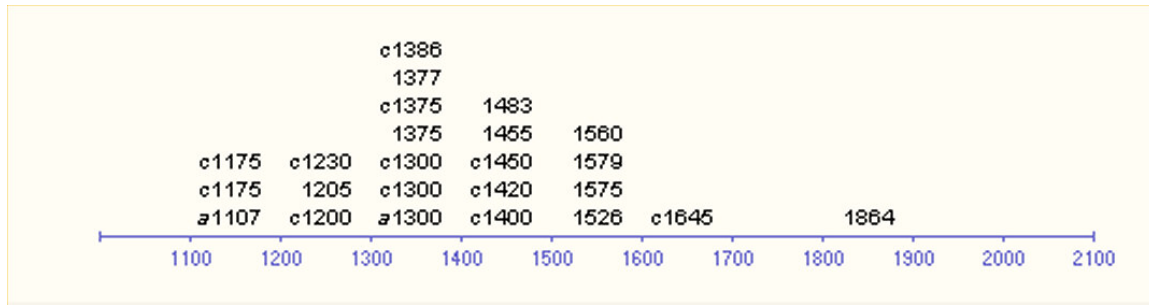[8] This paradigm is adapted from Cassidy and Ringler (1971).

Figure 4.1: Timetable for Appearance of the past participle of *Be* in Literary Sources[9]

In Old English, *beon* (as its own distinct verb) had all the present tenses, but no past tenses. Its meaning was slightly different than the Modern English "to be," meaning instead "become" or "come to be." As such, *beon* often served as the future tense for *is/wesan*. An important transition took place, however, such that by the beginning of the thirteenth century, parts of *be* took the place of the infinitive, participle, imperative, and subjunctive forms of *is/wesan*. This effectively merged the three Old English stems into one Middle English verb.

Wherever *been* occurs in literature historically, functioning as a past participle, it is always accompanied by an auxiliary (usually *has/have/had*), as shown in the following examples (which demonstrate past perfect):

(1) Vche mon þat he mette, he made hem a þonke/ For his seruyse and his solace and

his sere pyne,/ Þat þay wyth busynes **had ben** aboute hym to serue;

[Each man that he met, he gave them his thanks/ For his service and his kindness

and his individual trouble,/ Those whom with solicitude **had been** about to serve

him (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 1984-1986)]

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[9] This timetable as well as information on spelling variations and etymology of *beon* in this section comes from the Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2nd edition. See References for a full citation for this resource.

(2) At mortal batailles **hadde he been** fiftene,/ And foughten for oure feith at

Tramyssene/ In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.

[At mortal battles **had he been** fifteen/ and fought for our faith at Tramyssene

(Tlemcen)/ in formal duels three times, and always slain his foe. (*Canterbury*

Tales, General Prologue, lines 61-63)]

As a past participle, *been* required an auxiliary and did not function as a simple past tense

replacement (which would not be necessary since *be* had a viable past tense marker in *wesan*,

and later, *was*). This pattern has continued into Modern English in that *been* as the past

participle requires an auxiliary.

The data presented in section 3.2 likewise supports this pattern in the vernacular

environments observed for this study. The majority of tokens for *been* were categorized as

exhibiting the past participle with a deleted auxiliary, with the second largest number of

tokens showing either a remnant/cliticized form of the auxiliary or the whole auxiliary. This

indicates that while the auxiliary requirement for *been* has survived to Modern English,

vernacular usage is less reliant on the presence of the auxiliary for the past participle to

function. Less reliance on the inflected auxiliary could indicate leveling (and thereby

weakening) of *been* to more closely mimic the infinitive and other forms of the original *beon*,

which remained in circulation along with *am/is/are* until as late as the seventeenth century.

4.3.2 Development of *Done*

Unlike *been*, the verb *do* did have a past participle in Old English: *don* (also spelled

using the form *gedon*). Old English *don* was also not nearly as variable from one tense to

another as Old English *beon*, showing differences mainly in the core vowel and the tense

endings, as shown in Table 4.7:

Table 4.7: Old English Conjugation of *Don*[10]

Case	Number		Present	Preterit
Indicative	Sing.	ic:I	dō	dyde
		þū:you, thou	dēst	dydest
		hē, hit, hēo: he, it, she	dēð	dyde
	Plur.	we, ge, hie: we, you, they	dōð	dydon
Subjunctive	Sing.		dō	dyde
	Plur.		dōn	dyden
Imperative	Sing.		dō	
	Plur.		dōð	
Participle			dōnde	dōn

As with *been*, the literary record for *done* shows it being used with an auxiliary when used as a past participle:

> (1) Bi þat þe diner **watz done** and þe dere vp/ Hit watz ne3 at þe niy3t ne3ed þe tyme.
>
> [By the time dinner **was done** and the noble [Sir Gawain] was up from the table/
>
> nighttime had drawn near. (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 928-929)]

The majority of tokens for *done* in section 3.2 are categorized as exhibiting simple past tense replacement or past participle with a deleted auxiliary, with no definite indication in most cases that the token is solely exhibiting one of these behaviors over the other.

The requirement for an auxiliary accompanying the past participle has survived in Modern English for *done* as it has for *been*. The results of this study, however, suggest that *done* is

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[10] This paradigm is adapted from Cassidy and Ringler (1971).

more acceptable in vernacular usage without the auxiliary (either whole or as a remnant/cliticized form) than *been*.

Once again, the explanation can be found in leveling *done* with the infinitive *do* and the present tense (neither of which require an auxiliary to function). Replacing a viable past tense form (*did*) with the past participle, with or without its auxiliary, further reduces what inflection remains in the endings for *do*, and further drives this verb toward a weaker format.

4.3.3 Development of *Come*

The past participle for *come* in Old English is *cumen*, which is similar but not identical to the infinitive form, *cuman*. Table 4.8 shows the conjugation of *cuman*:

Table 4.8: Old English Conjugation of *Cuman*[11]

Case	Number		Present	Preterit
Indicative	Sing.	ic:I	cyme	cōm
		þū:you, thou	cymest	cōmest
		hē, hit, hēo: he, it, she	cymeð	cōm
	Plur.	we, ge, hie: we, you, they	cumað	cōmon
Subjunctive	Sing.		Cume	cōme
	Plur.		Cumen	cōmen
Imperative	Sing.		Cum	
	Plur.		Cumað	
Participle			Cumande	cumen, cymen

The paradigm shown in Table 4.7 does not represent the sole, definitive forms of

cuman. There was a great deal of variation in spelling depending on dialect/regional

differences, especially during the Middle English period. For example, before AD 1100, the

infinitive form was *cuman*; however, between AD 1200 and AD 1400, the infinitive form

was *cumen*. Another major variation was in the core vowel, which was spelled as *y*, *u*, *o*, or *ō*.

For example, the present indicative, third person singular form appeared in literature as *cymþ*,

cymmeð, *cumeþ*, and *cometh* between AD 1100 and AD 1300. The preterit indicative, third

person singular appeared in literature as *cwōm*, *cuōm*, *cōm*, and *coom* between AD 1100 and

AD 1500. Aside from regional differences, one of the main reasons for this level of variation

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[11] This paradigm was composed based on three sources: Cassidy and Ringler (1971), Mitchell and Robinson (2001), and the Oxford English Dictionary Online.

in the written record was the tendency of Middle English scribes to use short *o* for *u* before

m, *n*, and *u* (or *v*). Scribes also tended to use short *o* in place of the long ō in the past tense.

These written variations are not indicative of a change in pronunciation, but they should be

noted when considering conjugations of *cuman* in Old and Middle English literary sources.[12]

Of particular interest for the purposes of this study are the transitions that took place

in the past participle and past tense of *cuman* between AD 1100 and AD 1500. Taking into

consideration the variations in the core vowel, as mentioned above, the past participle existed

in three major forms between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries: *cumen* (forms ending in

n); *cum*, *ycome*, *come* (forms without the *n* ending); and *cummed*, *com'd* (forms exhibiting

the weakened past participle, ending in *ed*/*d*). Beginning in the thirteenth century, the past

participle *cumen* showed a loss of word-final *n*. This loss was especially prevalent in forms

of the word appearing with the *y* prefix, so that *ycomen* became *ycome*. The form that

resulted was eventually leveled with the infinitive and would go on to be standardized as the

Modern English form *come*. Before this standardization, however, there was a period during

the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in which the tendency was to conform the past

participle to the weakened conjugation, *comed*, which became established dialectally, for

example south of Scotland. While full weakening to an *-ed* ending did not survive to Modern

English, leveling the past participle to match the infinitive still shows considerable

weakening of the verb over time.

Coinciding with the changes in the past participle, the past tense also existed in three

major forms, but had all but completed its final transition by the early sixteenth century. The

three past tense forms were *cuom*/*cuomon*, *cōm*/*cōmon*, and *cam*/*camen*. The final of these

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[12] Information on spelling variations and etymology of *cuman* in this section comes from the Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2nd edition. See References for a full citation for this resource.

three forms represents a change in the core vowel that originated in northern dialects of

English and made its way gradually into the other dialects until it had all but replaced the

previous *cōm/cōmon* form. Smith (2000) notes "The form *came* entered the language in the

thirteenth or fourteenth century in more northern varieties of Middle English, and in southern

varieties, even later, around the fifteenth century." The earlier form remained prevalent in

Midland and Southern dialects, but appeared very little in literary contexts beyond AD 1500.

Though *came* eventually replaced *come* for the simple past tense marker, it is possible

that dialectal retention of the earlier *cōm* form would have persisted to Modern English.

Given the transitions in both the past participle and the past tense, and the leveling of the past

participle to a form that closely resembles the former past tense form (though it arrived at this

form by different means), it is not difficult to understand why Modern English dialects might

use *come* as the past tense marker. As with *done*, this is in fact what is reflected in the data

for *come* in section 3.2, as the majority of tokens were categorized as exhibiting either simple

past tense replacement or past participle with deleted auxiliary.

4.4 Parallel Analogical Constructions

4.4.1 Negation and the Auxiliary

While it is helpful to understand the causes of auxiliary deletion within the

parameters of the tokens observed in this study, it is equally helpful to see similar processes

at work in other environments to support the notion that such processes can and do occur. As

part of her overall study of Scottish English, Jennifer Smith (2000) examines negation

historically and in Scottish English, particularly the dialect of the small fishing town of

Buckie. Smith notes four points of development in English negation:

(1) Use of pre-verbal negative particle *ne* in Old English

(2) Appearance of *noht* post-verbally (coexisting with *ne*)

(3) Use of post-verbal *noht* only

(4) Insertion of auxiliary *do* and re-introduction of a pre-verbal negative particle, *not*.

She also observes, however, that there was a brief period in which the negative particle *noht* was used in the preverbal position without auxiliary *do*.

As Smith's study reveals, Scottish English shows interesting developments with negation in which the *do* that developed in English as a whole also developed in their negation; however, in Scottish English, this inserted auxiliary disappears. The result is negation marked in some (but not all) instances with only a pre-verbal *na* without the auxiliary *do*. In essence, Scottish English underwent the developments outlined in (1) through (4), then reverted to the final "intermediate" stage, in which *do* was deleted.

Smith attributes this deletion to syntactic influence in which the presence or deletion of *do* depends entirely on the syntactic environment: at times dependent on the type of subject and at times dependent on the person and number of the subject. For example, Smith observes that *do* absence is particularly high for the first person singular of the verbs she studied, while third person singular tends to include *do*.

While the cause and environment for Smith's data is different from those of this study, the overall phenomenon is the same:

(1) A structure was created for a particular function.

(2) An auxiliary was inserted to support that function.

(3) The auxiliary was deleted as an optional support.

The key similarity of the circumstances of deletion compared here is that in both Smith's study and the current study, the environments represent movement toward a highly

weakened state in which even the auxiliary (itself a mechanism of weakening) has been

removed to continue the overall shift toward weaker constructions.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Summary of Findings and Analysis

This study has observed, and set out to explain, the apparent use of past participle verb forms with deleted auxiliary to mark the simple past tense. The tokens *come*, *been*, and *done* were recorded by occurrence and environment across five dialects of English, three American (Beech Bottom, NC; Princeville, NC; Robeson County, NC) and two non-American (Abaco, Bahamas; and Tristan da Cunha). Five common environments were observed as a result:

(1) Token replaced simple past tense form; past perfect was not possible in this environment.

(2) Token functioning as the past participle, with clear deletion of auxiliary; past perfect was possible and appropriate in this environment.

(3) Deletion of auxiliary was not clearly evident; token could be exhibiting 1 or 2.

(4a) Token was present with auxiliary.

(4b) Token was present with remnant/cliticized form of auxiliary.

(5) Token exhibited other use (e.g. completive *done*, in subjunctive construction with modals, etc.).

Of primary importance was the observation that for all three tokens, the simple past tense had been replaced with a past participle form of the verb. In some cases it was strongly evident that the replacement was by the past participle and its auxiliary functioning as they did historically, and in other cases it was only evident that the past tense was now

represented by a past participle where it normally, grammatically would not appear. For *been*, there was a strong occurrence of deleted auxiliary, followed closely by evidence of a remnant form of the auxiliary: either the auxiliary was still completely present or a remnant, cliticized form was present. For *done*, there was a strong occurrence of replacement of the simple past tense, with ambiguous evidence of auxiliary deletion (environment (3)). For *come*, there was some evidence of the cliticized form of the auxiliary, as well as some evidence that the auxiliary was still present, but overall, there was a strong occurrence of replacement of the simple past tense, with ambiguous evidence of auxiliary deletion (again, environment (3)).

The results of this study are in line with the historical development of these tokens. The auxiliary should be more evident for *been* since *be* required (and continues to require in Modern English) the presence of an auxiliary wherever the past participle was used. As this study demonstrated, vernacular usage is less reliant on the presence of the auxiliary for the past participle to function. Less reliance on the inflected auxiliary could indicate leveling (and thereby weakening) of *been* to more closely mimic the infinitive and other forms of the original *beon*.

Likewise for *do* an auxiliary was required historically whenever *done* was used to form the past participle; however the results of this study suggest that *done* is more acceptable in Modern English vernacular usage without the auxiliary than *been*. Again, leveling with the infinitive and present tense can be used to explain these results as neither infinitive nor present tense require an auxiliary to function. The end result, replacing a viable past tense form (*did*) with the past participle, with or without its auxiliary, is reduced inflectional endings for *do*, and a further weakened strong verb.

The history of *come*, while not as straightforward as that of *been* and *done*, also shows this pattern of weakening via leveling of the past participle to resemble the infinitive and present tense. The simple past tense and past participle for *come* both underwent significant structural changes between Old and Modern English to the extent that the past participle developed into a form that closely resembled a past tense form for *come* that no longer exists today. Dialectal retention of *come* as a simple past tense marker (which would not require an auxiliary to function) makes sense in light of the historical development of these two parts of the verb *come*. The data generated from this study, showing a majority of tokens exhibiting either simple past tense replacement or past participle with deleted auxiliary, also supports the explanation that *come* has been leveled historically to a weakened format.

The overall pattern of development for auxiliaries helps to solidify the mechanism for their deletion in modern vernacular environments. Recall that Smith (2000) observes the following progression:

(1) A structure was created to fulfill the past tense function.

(2) The auxiliary was inserted to support that function.

(3) The auxiliary was deleted as it became optional support.

For the verbs in this study, this progression resulted in the development of vernacular past tense markers that took the form of the past participle, for which the auxiliary was not required, but could appear (as the whole auxiliary, or in cliticized form). As each of these past participles was leveled to resemble the infinitive and present tense, the auxiliary became more optional, as neither the infinitive nor the present tense require the use of an auxiliary.

Movement overall among these and all English verbs has been from strong to weak, and the deletion of the auxiliary reflects this. The auxiliary was inserted to make strong verbs weaker, but the momentum for change to weaken strong verb forms carried the process further until the historically optional auxiliary (the only remaining inflected part of the verb phrase for these strong verb, past tense constructions) was itself deleted in favor of the uninflected, past participle functioning as simple past tense marker. In the case of the Smith (2000) study, the mechanism for deletion of the auxiliary was syntactic pressure making the auxiliary optional. For this study, the mechanism is the pressure to move toward increasingly weak constructions. The net result, however, is identical: the auxiliary is at first optional, but ultimately becomes obsolete, subdued by the greater force of strong-to-weak movement.

5.2 Further Study

In order to keep the scope of this study within reason, three tokens that appeared commonly across all five dialect communities examined were chosen and analyzed for shared characteristics and patterns of development historically. Outside of *been*, *done*, and *come*, however, there were several other verbs, strong and weak, that exhibited shared characteristics and behaviors across all of the dialects. Given a greater amount of time and resources, continuation of this study to encompass a broader look at cross-dialectal behaviors among verbs would be worthwhile.

Of particular benefit would be a comparison of strong and weak verb behaviors, and the inclusion of many more dialects of English, American and non-American, to provide a "big picture" look at verb functionality in English dialects. Are there dialects in which the patterns observed in this study either don't exist or show contradictory behavior? Are there additional, similar patterns such as the auxiliary deletion with negation observed by

Jennifer Smith? This study, while attempting to be thorough, has really provided only a glimpse into a much greater field for exploration. It is this author's hope that the scope of this subject will become less daunting as more scholars work to bring the pieces together to understand and complete that greater picture that is our English language.

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7 Appendices

The following tables list the recorded environments for the *been*, *done*, and *come*

tokens as observed for this study from recorded speech samples.

Table 7.1: Recorded Environments for the *Been* Token

Been	
Environment	**Notes**
…the town always **been** known as a flooded area.	Deletion of auxiliary *has*
I always **been** a community person with the organization that I work for…	Deletion of auxiliary *have*
I **been** here since '60…	Deletion of auxiliary *have*
I **been** around Princeville…	Deletion of auxiliary *have*
and I **been** in this area…	Deletion of auxiliary *have*
I **been** sick over it…	Deletion of auxiliary *have*
I'm been here 85 years	*I'm* in place of *I've [I have]*
cause **I'm been** here the longest	*I'm* in place of *I've [I have]*
You **been** in the store?	Deletion of auxiliary *have*
but **I am been** to the colored woman	*am* in place of *have*
There's been fellers come in here	*There's*, showing cliticized remnant of *has*
And I **been** here ever since.	Deletion of auxiliary *have*
I asked 'em had they **been** up there…	Presence of auxiliary *had*
She says, "Yes, ma'am, we **been** up there and we can't find it."	Deletion of auxiliary *have*
'Cause my **children's always been** my heart, and my grandchildren. They're just as close to me as my heart.	*Children's*, showing cliticized remnant of *has*
So one day I gone by there; I forgot where I **had been**.	Use of auxiliary *had*
I've been to school, and it'd be so cold when you'd get there, you couldn't even unbutton your coat hardly.	Use of cliticized auxiliary *have*
I **been** talking to some people in the last couple months.	Deletion of auxiliary *have*
But it would **have been** a bit expensive.	Use of auxiliary *have*
But there just encyclopedia's there **that's been** there since **we've been** there.	Use of cliticized *has* on *that's*; use of cliticized auxiliary *have*
And **nothing's been** done about it.	Use of cliticized l *has* on *nothing's*
Oh, I **been** aboard a lot of them.	Deletion of auxiliary *have*

Table 7.2: Recorded Environments for the *Done* Token

Done	
Environment	**Notes**
You **done** lost everything	*Done* used emphatically (e.g., *you did lose everything*)
And that's exactly what I **done**	Use of *done* in place of *did*
I **done** some farming, we done farming	Deletion of auxiliary *have*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
That's all he ever **done**	Use of *done* in place of *did*
I **done** it for thirty years	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
All you **done** was rode it a couple times…	Use of *done* in place of *would do/would have done*
He **done** all right in it.	Use of *done* in place of *did*
…but when you **done** the wrong thing, the teacher'd eat you up.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
Done a lot of hard work and I **done** a lot of easy work.	Deletion of auxiliary *have* in understood *I have*; deletion of auxiliary *have*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
That's the way my daddy **done**.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
And I got up when it **done** that and I said, "Well stay right there if you want to and I'm going to shoot right out the window."	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
First year I was there, I **done** pretty good and was awarded the president's ring of honor.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
And then I had another song that **done** very well.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
And, uh, I **done** very good up until uh this past August.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *done* in place of *did*
At that time, they, you know, they **done** away with that.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *done* in place of *did*

Table 7.3: Recorded Environments for the *Come* Token

Come	
Environment	**Notes**
the water kinda **come** out over there…	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
I jabbed his eyes out and **come** around and beat him half to death. I don't care how big he was.	Use of *come* in place of *came*
it **come** up here mostly late in the evening	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
we didn't never have no more water till this **come** up	Use of *come* in place of *came*
Now they tell me **MacDonald's come** from England	Use of cliticized *has* on *MacDonald's*
And he **come** for her [talking about a man picking up a ship he had ordered]	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
I **come** up, yes. [speaker was asked if they tried to raise their children the same way they had "come up"]	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
…you took some to the mill and you ground it, **come** back home, put baking soda in it, fixed it…	Use of *come* in place of *came*
So when I **come** to be twenty, I decided…	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
So I **come** back and uh **come** over here and worked with my daddy-in-law.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
I **come** here and worked for her.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
Guy **come** out of Raeford.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
He heared that I had lost my husband and he **come** out to see what he could do…	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
I believe it was along in March when the welfare guy **come** out to talk with me.	Use of *come* in place of *came*
And we would pull bacca plants…when they **come** in from school every evening…	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
I reckon he **come** from up in that, they **come** from out of Scotland county. That's what he **come** from.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*

Table 7.3 (continued)

Come	
Environment	**Notes**
He **come** home and spent some time with me.	Use of *come* in place of *came*
And he **come** here one year, and wanted me to go with him to a Indian meeting.	Use of *come* in place of *came*
Honey, we **come** up the hard way.	Use of *come* in place of *came*
We went to school that morning, and **come** home, pulled off our over patch clothes.	Use of *come* in place of *came*
They **come** up along to here and they had them there buttons…	Use of *come* in place of *came*
He stayed up here in Richmond, Virginia. He **come** down, regular.	Use of *come* in place of *came*
Well we had planned to marry when he **come** home, you know.	Use of *come* in place of *came*
But there **had come** this tornado storm or something that a-hitting some of the places we were supposed to go.	Presence of auxiliary *had*
All of 'em **come** together at the co-op.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
Now when she was, when she **come** along, things just a little bit better.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
Back, I think when they started mixing up races so bad, that's where this disrespect thing **come** in.	Use of *come* in place of *came*
But when I **was coming** along, gosh, if you got a whipping at school, you **come** home and got another one.	Use of *come* in place of *came*
No, he **come** back when, uh, it was Trevor **come** back when the Edinburgh [unclear] was it?	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
Simon **come** back 'fore Christmas because, uh, I know he griped about the, we bought for Justin, for Christmas presents. So he must 'a come back 'fore Christmas.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*

Table 7.3 (continued)

Come	
Environment	**Notes**
Simon come back 'fore Christmas because, uh, I know he griped about the, we bought for Justin, for Christmas presents. So he must **'a come** back 'fore Christmas.	Use of cliticized *have* on *must 'a come*
And we went off once and the snook **come** around, we caught a hundred and twelve snook.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
When administrators **come** to the island, you see, they took over.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*
I was only chief, you see, before any administrators **come** to the island.	Deletion of auxiliary *had*; or use of *come* in place of *came*