

## CHAPTER - II

What may be called a survey of the position of the past perfective in English grammar could profitably begin with Nesfield (1953 : 178-9) and end with Quirk et al (1985), because the former had been for long an indispensable key to grammatical problems while the latter is, as its authors claim, the culmination of their joint work since the 1960s and one which is perhaps the most detailed of the recent publications on descriptive grammar.

In the section entitled 'Uses of Tenses' under the chapter heading 'Verbs', Nesfield (1953 : 173-9) adopts a very direct and unambiguous approach to the past perfective — an approach of the widest currency perhaps, and very definitely the one emulated by the Indian writers of English grammar :

The Past Perfect (also called Pluperfect) — this is used whenever we wish to say that some action had been completed before another was commenced.

The verb expressing the previous action is put into the Past Perfect or Pluperfect tense. The verb expressing the subsequent action is put into the Past Indefinite .... The past perfect ought never to be used at all except to show the priority of one past event to another.

Reduced to a formula, the operation of the past perfective — in terms of Nesfield's prescription — would thus be : "Before before, after after". Hence, one can write either "I had seen him before he saw me", wherein 'had' comes before 'before', or

"He saw me after I had seen him" wherein 'had' is posited after 'after'. What is more important is that in Nesfield's prescription there is no place whatsoever for constructions like "The patient died before the doctor had come" and "The patient had died before the doctor had come" — constructions that violate the "before before, after after" formula. Besides, Nesfield does not say anything about a construction like "The patient died before the doctor came" either. That is to say, Nesfield does not say anything about the feasibility of showing past-within-past events without the help of 'had'.

To what extent this approach has remained valid can be seen from the fact that most school-level books on English grammar repeat Nesfield without any variation. Thus Wren & Martin (1959: 108), a mentor to the students of English medium schools in India, present the issue in the same way as Nesfield :

The Past Perfect (also called the Pluperfect) denotes an action completed at some point in past time before another action was commenced; as,

The rain had stopped when we came out.

I had done my exercise, when Hari came to see me.

I had written the letter before he arrived.

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The only Indian school-level book on English grammar that has sought to say something more than Nesfield is De Sarkar's A Text-Book of Higher English Grammar, Composition & Translation (1968) which has the following entry on the past perfective : "The Past Perfect Tense expresses an action completed before another past action : He had left before I came" (P. 52). De Sarkar examines — in a foot-note, however — the possibility of using simple past tense instead of the past perfective : "But the modern tendency is to use the Past Indefinite Tense even for Past Perfect. COD has 'This was after he became famous' under after" (ibid.).

"The Past Perfect Tense denotes that one action was finished before another action was begun" — this is the way Henderson's The English Way (1954 : 53) approaches the issue along with the example "He had left the house before you telephoned". One important and curious point to notice here is Henderson's use of simple past tense instead of past perfect tense. While Nesfield (see infra) lives up to his own prescription in writing "... some action had been completed before another was commenced" (underlining mine), Henderson does not put into practice the theory he upholds : he is using a simple past in the passive voice ('was finished'), while he should — in the light of what he says about the past perfective — have used a past perfect in the passive voice ('had been finished'). Wren and Martin run the risk of being accused of the same fault as Henderson, but they might be given the benefit of the doubt because of their use of an understood clause :

"... an action completed ..." = either 'an action [which was] completed' or 'an action [which had been] completed'. This small discrepancy between theory and practice regarding the use of the past perfective entails some such uneasy questions as "Can we use simple past tense instead of the past perfective? If we can, when and why?"

West and Kimber (1957) deal rather untidily with 'had', which deserves mention mainly for two reasons : first, it culls an instance of overuse of 'had' from a source which might offset Bernard Comrie's (1985 :69) claim that "over-use of the pluperfect, precisely to indicate remoteness without an intervening reference point, is one of the salient characteristics of many varieties of Indian English ...", and secondly, it tentatively recommends use of simple past instead of the past perfective. Reproduced below is all that West and Kimber (1957 : 126) have to say on the use of 'had' :

Had - A narrative often starts with some incident and then tracks backwards to tell about the leading character. "John Smith raised the revolver and fired twice. He had started life in a small grocer's shop. He had had little education ...", etc., for several pages of "Had" and "Had had". Example : Always say die, E. Ferrars (Collins), page 19, contains 34 "hads" in 397 words. It is easier both for writer and reader to use the simple past tense : "He started life ... He had little ...", etc.

In spite of its rather shaky suggestion that the past perfective may be replaced by the simple past from the pragmatic point of view, Deskbook basically remains faithful to the orthodox view (of Nesfield's) on the use of the past perfect tense in English.

To the group of writers of 'handbook of English (grammar)' that follow the beaten track belong Kierzek and Gibson (1960 : 246). Their observation, "The past perfect tense shows that an act was completed before some specified or understood time in the past" (P. 246), and the attendant example — "I had registered for the course before I spoke to him" — go in compliance with the strong prescriptive norms that even handbooks of higher reputations did not or could not violate. One really may wonder why a very influential handbook like Zandvoort's A Handbook of English Grammar (1975) — which has been referred to by Quirk et al (1985) — should remain so calmly content with the set pattern. Although Zandvoort (1975 : 62-3) does not make use of before or after clauses in the examples he gives in support of his views on the role and function of the pluperfect, he seems to see nothing complicated in the matter : "The PLUPERFECT (had + perfect participle) answers partly to the past tense, partly to the perfect. It may be said to represent a shifting back of these tenses into the (more distant) past" (p. 62). Zandvoort cites three examples wherein "the pluperfect represents a past tense (or preterite) shifted back" (p. 63):

I was told that twenty aeroplanes had  
been shot down the day before. (135)

They had always been to a pantomime  
at Christmas. (136)

He wished he had known the fellow's  
name. (138)

What is worth noting here is that Zandvoort does not clarify what he means by 'shifting back'. If 'shifting back' means referring to an anterior past event then the third example does not indicate the anterior past event in the same way as the two other do : it is rather a case of what is called hypothetical past perfect. Zandvoort perhaps has in mind here the direct-indirect narration of sentences. But, then, the direct speech form of "He wished he had known the fellow's name" may be the following, too : "Had I known the fellow's name, I said he". In this case, the pluperfect (in the reported speech) in the indirect narration would remain the same as that in the direct narration.

The following are the examples Zandvoort cites with a view to showing how "the pluperfect represents a perfect tense shifted back" (1975 : 63) :

They had known each other for years (130).

I asked her how long the man had been unconscious (130).

She told me she had bought a new hat (140).

They had been to the pictures twice that  
week (140.1).

The inspector had noticed that when Trent had picked up a strong scent he whistled faintly a certain melodious passage (141).

It may be seen that while the second and the third examples contain direct references to two past events, the first and the fourth depend on contexts which would show posterior past events. On simple terms, we might say that Zandvoort is trying here to show how 'had' can be equated with backshifted 'have'. Given this, we are a little puzzled to deal with the two 'had's in the fifth example : if pushed forward (that is, in direct speech narration), the sentence would look something like the following : "The inspector has noticed that when Trent has picked up a strong scent he whistles faintly ...."

Although it is really curious to see that Zandvoort has avoided citing examples containing before and after clauses to highlight 'backshifting', his main point is clear enough : the pluperfect is used for backward movement along the time-scale. And so far as his main point is concerned, Zandvoort remains orthodox.

Hornby (1962) is one of the very few orthodox, or traditional grammarians who have attempted to see if the past simple could do duty for the past perfective. In his A Guide to Patterns and Usage in English (1962), he begins very traditionally:

To indicate activities that took place within a period of time that extended to and included a point or period of time completely in the past (the 'before-past'), the Past Perfect Tense may be used. The point or period of past time is either named or implied. (p.100)

Hornby, however, is clearer than Zandvoort in showing the role of the past perfective in a reported speech:

The Past Perfect naturally replaces the Past Tense and the Present Perfect Tense in reported speech after a reporting verb in the Past Tense 'I have already read that book'. She told me that she had already read that book. (p. 101)

What is interesting in Hornby is the way he makes the past simple take over the past perfective :

If the sequence of events is clear without the use of two different tenses, the Past Tense may be used to indicate two (or more) events. This is usually the case when the conjunction is before.

He opened the window before he got into bed. The bus started just before I reached the bus stop. (p. 101)

The point is iterated in the note to the example 1<sub>d</sub> : "... the Past Tense is possible instead of the Past Perfect Tense in clauses with before. The conjunction before itself indicates the difference in time" (P. 102). Now, if we accept Hornby's contention that

The conjunctions used to join two sentences in which we indicate two past events, one of which precedes the other, are when, before, after, until, once, now that, and as soon as. These are often alternative constructions. (P. 102)

then we may recast the examples

- 1 a. When the bell rang, we had finished our work. The bell rang after we had finished our work.
- 1 b. When the bell rang, we had not finished our work. The bell rang before we had finished our work. (pp. 102-3)

into

- 1 a. When the bell rang, we finished our work. The bell rang after we finished our work.
- 1 b. When the bell rang, we did not finish our work. The bell rang before we finished our work.

Hornby invites us to "Compare the use of when and before and of when and after in these pair of sentences". (P. 102) and to "Note the changes from affirmative to negative in the examples marked a and b" (*ibid*). What escapes Hornby's attention here is the use of the past perfective in the before - Clause ('before we had finished our work') and its implication. Can we claim that 'The

bell rang before we had finished our work' and 'The bell rang before we finished our work' mean the same? Hornby has not said that they do not. Let us clinch the issue algebraically : in  $1_b$  of Hornby's example we have  $x = y$  ('x' and 'y' being the two sentences); in our recast of  $1_b$ , we have  $a = b$  ('a' and 'b' being the two sentences). Now, since, according to Hornby, conjunctions are often alternatives and the past simple may be used instead of the past perfective when the sequence of events is clear, we can say that  $x = a$ . But the question is : can we say that  $y = b$ ? If we cannot, the deduction would be something like the following:

$$\begin{array}{l} | \quad x = y \\ | \\ | \quad a = b \\ \\ | \quad x = a \\ | \\ | \quad y \neq b \end{array}$$

Hornby does not clarify this point. But, as we will see later, the use of 'had' in before - clause is by no means a simple case.

Leech's An A-Z of English Grammar and Usage (1991), in spite of its very limited scope, has brought in the question whether the past simple can be used in the place of the past perfective. While one may not expect much from any A-Z type of handbook, one at the same time turns to it for being definite about a particular point. Leech, certainly, inflates the reader's expectation by his prefatory claims:

This book is a basic guide to the grammar and usage of English for anyone learning or teaching the language. If you are a learner, it is a reference book in which to look up problems you encounter in using the language, as well as a book to find out more about the way English works. If you are a teacher, it is a basic reference book to turn to when faced with something you are not sure of .... PP. viii)

The grammar "rules" in this book are the rules of standard English .... This is a descriptive grammar book and, where a form is considered right by some native speakers and wrong by others, we point this out without being prescriptive.

(P. ix)

Although it is debatable whether descriptive grammar books can ultimately remain non-prescriptive (for a 'description' and the manner of it may take on in the user's mind the character of a 'prescription'), one really hopes to find in them descriptions adequate enough to make one's choice (e.g. 'owing to' or 'due to'?) not haphazardly but systematically. But, unfortunately, Leech's A-Z belies — so far as the past simple/past perfective choice is concerned — such an expectation because the description does not lead us to any firm point while the whole approach seems to hover between description and prescription. Let us see why.

The examples Leech (1991) cites showing the normal as well as the hyperbatonic positions of the after-clause and the before-clause do not contain the past perfective, although a direct reference is made, in each of the examples, to two past events:

The after-clause and the before-clause can be at the end of the sentence or at the beginning of the sentence.

E.G. (i) The airport police searched<sup>2</sup> all the passengers after the plane landed<sup>1</sup>.

Or After the plane landed<sup>1</sup>, the airport police searched<sup>2</sup> all the passengers.

(ii) We cleaned<sup>1</sup> the house before our friends arrived<sup>2</sup>.

Or Before our friends arrived<sup>2</sup>, we cleaned<sup>1</sup> the house.

(P. 29)

(<sup>1</sup> = first action; <sup>2</sup> = second action)

Giving extra weightage to words like 'before' and 'after', Leech suggests that these words can do the job of the past perfective :

In the clauses which describe the first action (<sup>1</sup>), we can use the PAST PERFECT in place of the PAST SIMPLE.

E.g. (i) The airport police searched<sup>2</sup> all the passengers after the plane had landed<sup>1</sup>.

(11) We had cleaned<sup>1</sup> the house before my friends arrived<sup>2</sup>.

NOTE : But the words before and after are enough to indicate which event happened first, whatever tense you use. (p. 29)

To describe an event or state which is past from the viewpoint of 'another' past time, we can use the PAST PERFECT.

E.g. When we arrived at the bus station, our bus had already left.

(P. 345)

The way Leech 'describes' the use of the past perfective makes it appear rather superfluous : his repeated observations that "we can [the stress has been added] use the PAST PERFECT" imply that normally the past simple is used instead of the past perfective. Arguably, Leech's 'NOTE' strongly declares that at least in before — and after — clauses one need not use the past perfective.

Leech does refer to the orthodox description of the function of the past perfective:

We use this form [had + Past participle] to show that one thing in the past (marked<sup>①</sup> below) (expressed by the Past Perfect) happened before another thing in the past (marked<sup>②</sup> below) (expressed by the Past Simple).



↑ ①  
before  
then

↑ ②  
then

(Past Perfect)    (Past Simple)

E.g. (i) The army had won<sup>①</sup> an important battle  
before they crossed<sup>②</sup> the border.

(ii) The prisoner was released<sup>②</sup> after he had  
been<sup>①</sup> in prison for several years.

(iii) When the play had finished<sup>①</sup>, the audience  
left<sup>②</sup> quietly.

(iv) It was<sup>②</sup> the first time he'd ever visited<sup>①</sup>  
a night club. (= 'He'd never visited a  
night club before that'.)

(pp. 335-6)

But soon Leech reviews this orthodox view and comments that

If it is clear that one action happened before another action, you don't have to use the Past Perfect : you can use the Past Simple instead. In examples (i) and (iii) above you can change the Past perfect to the Past Simple.

- E.g. (i) The army won an important victory before they crossed the border.
- (iii) When the play finished, the audience left quietly.

In example (i), before shows the relation between the two actions without the help of the verb. In example (iii), when means the play finished 'just before', so again you don't need the Past Perfect.

(p. 336)

Now, the point is that if Leech means to say that the use of the past perfective is not mandatory in sentences where the happening of one action before another in the past is clear, he should have written — "you may not use the Past Perfect : you may use the Past Simple instead"; but he becomes rather Prescriptive in saying — "you don't have to use the Past Perfect" and "you don't need the Past Perfect". Further, 'before' and 'after' are always likely to make it clear that "one action happened before [or after] another action" (P. 336); and if they do so, we can go well without the past perfective in sentences constructed with before — and after — clauses. Leech's A-Z ultimately has sought to solve some of the problems by adopting a short-cut : "if the meaning is clear, simply use the past simple", — this is what Leech probably wishes us to remember while positing Past within past.

Any discussion of the past perfective in English would remain substantially incomplete if Otto Jespersen's A Modern English

Grammar on Historical Principles Part IV (1931), Essentials of English Grammar (1933) and The Philosophy of Grammar (1924) are not taken up for a close reading. Before looking into Jespersen's treatment of the past perfective ('the pluperfect') in these three important works, one should bear in mind that the first two of his three books just referred to are surprisingly more descriptive than prescriptive. He seems content with piling up examples and so shrinks from framing principles. Whatever observation he finally makes does not seem to shed much light on the labyrinthine issue of the past perfective.

The difficulty in following Jespersen (1933 : 246) when he says that

If we have two successive happenings in the past  
 \_\_\_\_\_X \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_ (now)

e.g. First I saw him, and then he saw me, —  
 the pluperfect serves to connect them grammatically:

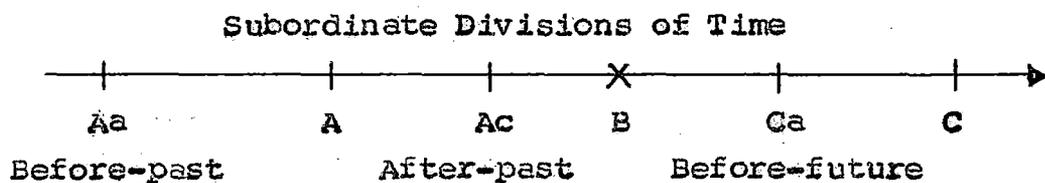
I had seen him before he saw me.

I saw him before he had seen me.

He saw me after I had seen him.

He did not see me till I had seen him.

is that he presents the examples as interchangeable in meaning. While none can find any difficulty whatsoever in equating 'I had seen him before he saw me' with 'He saw me after I had seen him', one really cannot easily equate 'I saw him before he had seen me' with either of them. Besides, Jespersen's examples showing 'Subordinate Divisions of Time' do not give us any idea of such interchangeability :



Before-past (Aa, before 'then'):

He had left before I arrived.

When he had gone out of the room, she burst out sobbing.

After he left England, a son was born to him.

(1933 : 291)

The puzzle remains the same in A Modern English Grammar Part IV (1931 : 82). What is needed here — and what here Jespersen's examples fail to supply — is an adequate explanation as to how the substitutions could be semantically valid.

So far as Jespersen's description of the preterit-pluperfect option (i.e. the question whether the past perfective can be replaced by the past simple) is concerned, there is no noticeable ambiguity about it : "In clauses beginning with after ... the

simple preterit often means the same thing as the pluperfect. The latter must, however, be considered the normal tense." (1933: 246-7). So, after Jespersen, we might regard He stood motionless after she disappeared as permissible but 'non-normal', and He stood motionless after she had disappeared as both permissible and 'normal'. But Jespersen's observations in respect of when clauses are not very sure-footed :

After when the simple preterit can sometimes be used, though the two events mentioned follow one after the other, and the preterit is thus equivalent to a pluperfect : When he came back from India, he was made a member of Parliament | When he got the letter, he burned it without looking at it.

But this is not always possible; the pluperfect is required in : When he had read the letter, he burned it | When, he had finished writing that book, he took a long rest.

(1931, Part IV : 83)

Unfortunately, Jespersen leaves us with no guidance as to when we might make use of the preterit (or, for that matter, the pluperfect) with when. Jespersen's word of caution — "But this is not always possible" — indicates that more than sheer caprice is involved, and raises the natural question — "When is it possible?", a question Jespersen has not cared to answer theoretically.

Jespersen's "examples of the simple preterit for the before-past <sup>h</sup>instead of the more usual pluperfect after as soon as, before and until" (1931, Part IV : 75) are in themselves quite simple :

AV John 11.29 Assoone<sup>#</sup> as she heard that, she  
 arose quickly | Goldsm V 2.211. As soon as he  
 left us, Sir William very politely step : up to  
 our new niece | Goldsm 631 he dropped the letter:  
 before he went [ = had gone ] ten yards from  
 the door | that happened before I met you  
 [ = had met ]

(ibid.)

What is really confusing here is Jespersen's indication of "the more usual pluperfect" given in the brackets. We are to take he dropped the letter before he had gone ... and that happened before I had met you as examples of the more usual pluperfect; but the question is : Why does not Jespersen put them thus -- he had dropped the letter before he went ... and that had happened before I met you? The question becomes all the more important since Jespersen himself cites the following sentences as examples of the 'normal' (= usual) tense :

|ib 341 | within ten minutes after he had received the assurance that the thing was impossible, he was conducted into the outer office | Bennett Cd 204 And after they had chatted a little ... he offered to display Machin House to Mr. Myson.

(1931, Part IV : 82)

Our point is that if a construction like that happened before I had met you is a case of "the more usual pluperfect", then a construction like And after they had chatted a little ... he offered to display ... Mr. Myson cannot be taken as a case of normal pluperfect (past perfective). And, similarly, if the latter is an example of 'normal' past perfective then the former cannot be regarded as an instance of the more usual pluperfect. However, the only way to accept a construction like that happened before I had met you as an example of the more usual pluperfect is to construe it as interchangeable with a construction like that had happened before I met you. In both Essentials of English Grammar (1933 : 246) and A Modern English Grammar Part IV (1931 : 82), Jespersen seems to have accepted such an interchangeability.

Another curious and rather vague observation by Jespersen on the modus operandi of the past perfective can be seen in the following:

In the following two quotations, the use of the pluperfect in the when-clauses, where the simple preterit would have been normal, seems to have been induced by the pluperfect in the main sentence;

Hardy R 374 when his mind had been weaker his heart had led him to speak out | Rose Macaulay  
 P When they had been little they had watched each other's plates with hostile eyes.

(1931, Part IV : 83)

Again, unfortunately, Jespersen does not explain what he means by the word 'induced' or how the induction operates. Does he simply mean to say that one 'had' has generated another 'had' in the sentences he cites? Further, Jespersen does not explore the possibility of such 'induction' in clauses with before, after etc. No other grammarian or linguist has recognized this phenomenon of 'induction', and only a few have even taken up for discussion constructions that have the past perfective in both the clauses. Quirk et al (1985 : 1020) have brought in I had seen him before he had seen me, but their interpretation of the sentence (or, for that matter, of the double use of 'had') is, as we will see soon, quite different from Jespersen's.

Jespersen's The Philosophy of Grammar (1924 : 262) complicates his own views as expressed in Essentials and Modern English Grammar. For in considering "the subordinate divisions of time, i.e. points in time anterior or posterior to some other point (past or future) mentioned or implied in the sentence concerned", Jespersen here formulates a strange model for 'before-past time' the application of which might look superfluous:

The relations between the two "times", the simple past and the before-past, may be represented graphically thus, the line denoting the time it took to write the letter, and the point C the time of his coming:

\*\*\*

He came before I had written the letter = either  
I finished writing the letter after he had come,  
 or I wrote the letter after he had come:

==== Or C =====  
 ↓  
 C

One thing, however, is clear from the extract above: Jespersen seems to indicate that a 'simple past + before + past perfect' structure (He came before I had written the letter) cannot be taken as a perfect substitute for a 'simple past + before + simple past' (He came before I wrote the letter) or 'past perfect + before + simple past' (He had come before I wrote the letter) structure.

A critical and closer examination of what Jespersen has got to say about the use of had in before-clauses will form a part of the chapter that follows the next.

It is interesting to see that A Grammar of the English Language Vol. III (1931), which was published in the same year as Jespersen's A Modern English Grammar (1931), directly contradicts the latter on the use of the past perfective. With as soon

as, Jespersen leaves a neat room for an interchangeability between the past simple and the past perfective :

We may say either : "As soon as he discovered them, he ran away", and [ sic ] "As soon as he had discovered them, he ran away".

(1931: Part IV; 83)

In cases like the following both tenses may be used :

As soon as he (had) discovered the police,  
he ran away.

(1933 : 247)

In Vol. III of A Grammar of the English Language (1931 : 361)

Curme maintains a diametrically opposite view:

In 'As soon as he heard that, he turned pale' heard cannot be replaced by had heard, although in fact the person in question heard the bad news before he turned pale. The use of the past perfect here would stress the time relation too much and call the attention away from the close relation of the two acts, the one following the other immediately.

When two such authorities differ so radically, certainty on the issue seems unattainable especially on the part of a lay man. Be that as it may, the most important point to note in the extract cited above as well as in the following

In colloquial speech, the past tense is still often used for the past perfect, as in the early period before the creation of a past perfect : 'After he finished the book, he returned it'. This usually occurs, as in this example, where the verb has point-action (38.2) force. Even in the literary language the past is used instead of the past perfect where some other idea overshadows that of the exact time relations: 'John was punished because he broke a window'. Of course, John broke the window before he was punished for it, but the fact of the breaking, in and of itself, is what is uppermost in the mind, not the exact time relations.

(ibid.)

is that Curme stresses the possibility of the use of the past simple instead of the past perfective in certain cases. And these cases are : (i) colloquial speech, (ii) when the verb gives us a point of action as opposed to a period of action, and (iii) when the exact time relation between the two events is less important than the close relation of the two acts (i.e. their simultaneity). Finally, Curme seems to suggest that we could use the past perfective only when we would like to stress the time relation.

Any work on English Tenses must refer to F.R. Palmer's The English Verb (1988) which is the revised version of his own A Linguistic Study of the English Verb (1965) and a long established account of all aspects of the English Verb. Although

Palmer (1988 : 37) makes it clear that tense has more to do than mark purely temporal relations, his views on the roles of the past perfective do not cover all its intricacies. In his opinion, I saw him yesterday can be reported as either He said he saw him the day before or He said he had seen him the day before, and the choice depends on viewpoint. To quote him:

Although the events referred to can be seen as past-past because they were already past for the original speaker speaking in the past, they can equally be seen, from the second speaker's point of view, as simply past. He is free, that is to say, to see them as simply past or as past-past. Unless he wishes to emphasize that they are past-past, i.e. that they were past for the original speaker, he would normally report them with the simple past, not using deictic shift.

(1988 : 42)

Palmer, however, does not go to explore what the simple past/past perfective choice in sentences like The patient had died before the doctor came and The patient died before the doctor came could suggest. Nor does he take up for investigation — even in the section captioned 'Problem uses' (1988 : 52) — cases like I saw him before he had seen me and I had seen him before he had seen me.

Palmer seems to see in the past perfective the roles that the present perfective plays in the domain of present. So according to him the past perfective may have a current relevance in

the domain of past just as have/has + past participle has a current relevance in the domain of present. This view leads him to say that "the past perfect ... is both 'past perfect' and 'past past' " (1988 : 52). What these two terms ( 'past perfect' and 'Past past') mean may be clear from the contrast he shows between I had already seen him when you arrived and I had seen him an hour before you arrived (1988 : 51):

The first is clearly past perfect — I saw him in a period of time preceding but up to the time of arrival, and there is current relevance. But the second merely places seeing him before the arrival-previously to a past point of time, i.e. 'past past'.

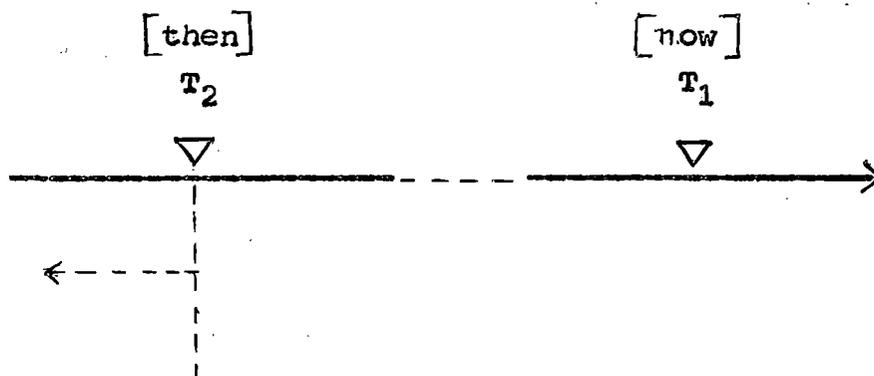
Palmer's argument is attractive and even suggestive of the extraordinary potentialities of the past perfective. But what he probably fails to see here is the role played by the measure words or specifiers like 'already' and 'an hour'. It is not impossible to say that the difference in semantic implication between the two sentences just referred to is brought about more by the specifiers than by the past perfective. That the issue is more complicated than Palmer thinks it to be can be guessed from Quirk et al's (1985 : 197) interpretation of a similar construction:

The thieves had run away when the police arrived. [12]  
 ... in [12] the when-clause is likely to be an  
 answer to the question : 'When had the thieves  
 run away?'

The fullest description of English grammar to appear in recent years is A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language by Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik (1985). This monumental work — clearly an extension of and improvement on A Grammar of Contemporary English by the same four authors (1972) — is the culmination of some twenty years' collaboration between the authors and has been an indispensable reference work for any advanced study of English grammar.

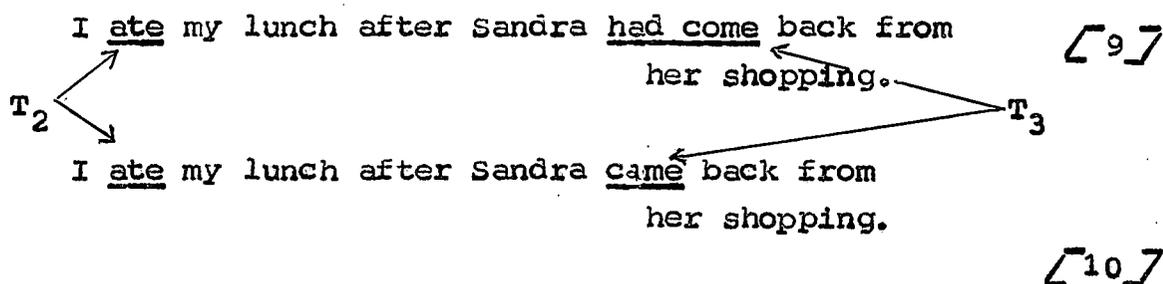
Quirk et al (1985) discuss the past perfective in English quite comprehensively. Still there is enough room for controversy. Indeed, at least on a particular structure of the past perfective, Quirk admits, "I don't believe we've explained the paradox correctly" (see Appendix I).

In exploring the meaning of the past perfective, Quirk et al (1985 : 195) use the following diagram:

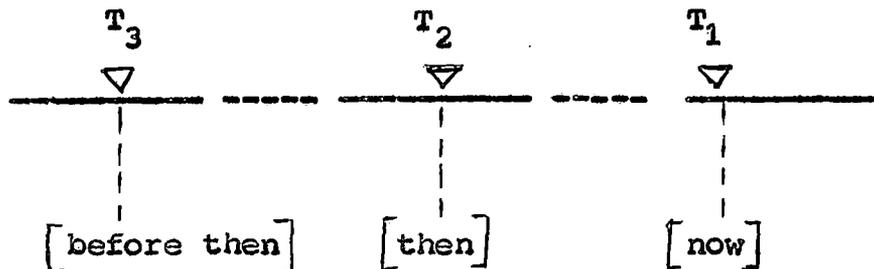


This diagram and the generalisations that "The past perfective usually has the meaning of 'past-in-the-past', and can be regarded as an anterior version either of the present perfective or of the simple past" (ibid.) and that "More technically, the past perfective may be said to denote any event or state anterior to a time of orientation in the past" (P. 196) represent the traditional view of the past perfective. But these generalisations tend to blur when the authors come to commenting on the interchangeability of the past perfective and the simple past:

But of course, the past perfective does not have to refer to a more remote time than that referred to by the simple past. In some cases, particularly in a clause introduced by after, the two constructions can be more or less interchangeable:



After places the eating ( $T_2$ ) after Sandra's return (which we may call  $T_3$ ), so the past perfective, which places  $T_3$  before  $T_2$ , is redundant. What difference it does make is a matter of the 'standpoint' of the speaker. In [9] the 'past in past' time  $T_3$  is identified as being earlier than  $T_2$  by the past perfective; but in [10] it is left to the conjunction after to signal this temporal relation.



(P. 196)

Such expressions as 'In some cases', 'more or less', 'matter of the standpoint' in the extract cited above leave the issue wide open. It is curious to note that although the benefit of the interchangeability is extended, in Note [a], to the clause introduced by when :

Note [a] When in the sense of 'immediately after' behaves like after in sentences [9] and [10].

The following are therefore virtually synonymous:

I ate my lunch when Sandra had come back from her shopping.

I ate my lunch when Sandra came back from her shopping.

(p. 197)

nothing is said in respect of before apart from borrowing an example ('I saw him before he saw me') from Jespersen (1931 : 82) and citing a couple of examples in Note [a] (p. 1082) which indicate that such interchangeability is possible even in

before-clauses. Further it is not very clear what Quirk et al mean by 'standpoint' of the speaker. Is it a simple case of a choice between two alternatives, or a complex matter of viewing things from different angles?

Quirk et al seem to invite complications when they say:

Adverbials of time position, when used with the past perfective, can identify either  $T_2$  or  $T_3$ . Placed initially, they often identify  $T_2$  :

When the police arrived, the thieves had run away. [11]

But in final position, the interpretation whereby the adverbial refers to  $T_3$  is more likely :

The thieves had run away when the police arrived. [12]

Hence in [11], when is likely to be equivalent to By the time that ..., but in [12] the when clause is likely to be an answer to the question: 'When had the thieves run away?'.  
(p. 197)

The difference shown is hardly convincing because for all practical purposes [11] is only a hyperbatonic arrangement of [12]. And there is no reason why each of [11] and [12] should not form the text from which the same question "When had the thieves run away?" can be set. Besides, Quirk et al

slip into contradiction because they hold at one point that "I ate my lunch when Sandra had come back from her shopping" and "I ate my lunch when Sandra came back from her shopping" are virtually synonymous because here when = 'immediately after' (P. 197. Note [a] ), but much later, however, they differentiate between when + the past perfective and when + the simple past :

When an after-clause refers to a past event, the verb may be in the past perfective, though it is more commonly in the simple past:

We ate our meal after we { returned  
had returned } from the game. [1]

If a construction with a when-clause refers to a sequence of two past events, the clause allows the same choice:

We ate our meal when we { returned  
had returned } from the game. [2]

All four forms of these sentences are acceptable, and mean roughly the same. The only difference is that when and the simple past (probably the most popular choice) suggests that the one event follows immediately on the other in sequence.

(pp. 1018-9)

It is also not clear why 'had' is used in paraphrasing the second example in the following:

Returning to my village after thirty years, I met an old school teacher.

[ 'When/After I returned...' ]

The stranger, having discarded his jacket, moved threateningly toward me. [ '... after he had discarded ...' ]

(p. 1080)

One is hard put to guess the difference supposedly effected by the presence and the absence of 'had' in the paraphrases given in the square brackets ; why "After I returned" and not "After I had returned", if one has to approve of "after he had discarded" (underlining mine) ?

What Quirk et al have said about the 'paradoxical' or non-factual past perfective (p. 1020) will be taken up in the fourth chapter. Here we would only consider one particular example and its accompanying generalisation:

Some before-clauses may be interpreted as either factual or nonfactual:

I sent a donation before I was asked to.

(P. 1081)

This, we might argue, is not a case of non-factuality at all because a before-clause in order to be non-factual needs the presence of the past perfective as in "I saw him before he had seen me" (p. 1020). Hence, "I sent a donation before I had been asked to" could be interpreted as non-factual while "I

sent a donation before I was asked to" corresponds to the same structure as in "I saw him before he saw me" (p. 1020) or in "I started my meal before Adam arrived" (p. 1081).

Finally, Quirk et al seem to be rather sceptical about the orthodox and rigid use of the past perfective in matters of positing past within past. Their scepticism is evident when they say:

It is not necessary, however, for the past tense to be accompanied by an overt indicator of time. All that is required is that the speaker should be able to count on the hearer's assumption that he has a specific time in mind. In this respect, the past tense meaning of DEFINITE PAST time is an equivalent, in the verb phrase, of the definite article in the noun phrase. Just as with the definite article (cf 5.27-32), so with the verb phrase, an element of definite meaning may be recoverable from knowledge of (a) the immediate or local situation; (b) the larger situation of 'general knowledge'; (c) what has been said earlier in the same sentence or text; or (d) what comes later on in the same sentence or text.

(p. 184)