学学丰丛书

◎总主编：蒋洪新

英语动词时与完成体的认知研究

A COGNITIVE STUDY OF TENSE AND
THE PERFECT ASPECT OF ENGLISH VERBS

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总 序

《论语》开篇云："学而时习之，不亦乐乎？"《朱子语类》云："读书，放宽著心，道理自会出来。若忧愁迫切，道理终无缘得出来。"以这两位先哲的名言作对照，我校国家重点学科英语语言文学的全体团队人员在岳麓山的美丽风景下，"放宽著心"，满腔热情地将自己教学与科研的体会变成学术成果，这无疑是件令人愉悦的事。

学者在希腊语中的意思即"忙碌的闲人"，他们在闲暇中忙碌自己的思想与智慧。雷震诗云："草满池塘水满坡，山衔落日浸寒漪。牧童归去横牛背，短笛无腔信口吹。"黄昏向晚，牧童横身牛背，信口吹笛，好一幅诗意盎然的乡村图景！若学人能像牧童那般信自悠闲，定能写出像样的作品。可惜，随着工业化的脚步，学者如世人一样越来越忙碌，闲暇的思考与阅读于他们弥足珍贵。亚里士多德曾说："我们工作是为了休闲"。此话对今天"能量崇拜以及行动狂热"（美国批评家白璧德语）的大学似乎成了日行渐远的理想。故美国哲人爱默生在美国现代化的进程中感叹说："迄今为止，我们的周年庆典仅仅是一种友善的象征而已，它表明我们这个民族虽然过分忙碌，无暇欣赏文艺，却仍然保留着对文艺的爱好。尽管如此，这个节日也是值得我们珍惜的，因为它说明文艺爱好是一种无法消除的本能。"这些话对当今的中国学术界以及体制化的大学具有一定的反省作用。本套丛书的出版得到了国家重点学科和"211工程"重点学科的资助，让处于浮躁时代与重压状态的学人免于奔波与忙碌之苦，他们得以专心自己的创作与研究。他们虽不能像牧童那般悠闲吹笛，但至少在整个写作与出版过程中能放宽心境，写出他们自己满意的作品。

曾国藩论读书之道时说："涵泳二字，最不易识，余尝以意测之，曰：涵者，如春雨之润花，如清渠之溉稻。雨之润花，过小则难透，过大则离披，适中则涵濡而滋液；清渠之溉稻，过小则枯槁，过多则伤涝，适中则涵养而兴。泳者，如鱼之游水，如人之濯足。程子谓鱼跃于渊，

活泼泼地；庄子言濠梁观鱼，安知非乐？此鱼水之快也。左太冲有'濯足万里流'之句，苏子瞻有夜卧濯足诗，有浴罢诗，亦人性乐水者之一快也。善读书者，须视书如水，而视此心如花如稻如鱼如濯足，则涵泳二字，庶可得之于意言之表。"学者能达到涵泳境界需要长期积累，还需要道德学问的气象，此方面我校开拓者钱基博、钱钟书堪为楷模。1938年日军大举入侵我中华内陆腹地，为培养师资与抗战军政干部，国民政府遂于湖南蓝田创立国立师范学院，是为我校前身。当时一批大学者云集我校，其中钱基博、钱钟书父子最引人注目。钱基博为我校中文系首任系主任，他有感于湖湘先贤"独立自由之思想，有坚强不磨之志节"，在国师写出《近百年湖南学风》一书，以百年变化寄托历史兴亡，唤起国人抗敌斗志。钱钟书为我校外文系首任系主任，他在湘西穷乡僻壤，孤独艰辛，诚如所言"如危幕之燕巢，同枯槐之蚁聚。"但他处乱不惊，沉潜学问，构思小说《围城》，并写出大半《谈艺录》。钱氏父子在我校开创之初的垂范影响着一代又一代湖南师大人。两位钱先生的境界，我们虽难以企及，但如《史记》所云："虽不能至，然心向往之。"

《学记》曰："是故学然后知不足，教然后知困。知不足，然后能自反也。知困，然后能自强也。故曰教学相长也。《兑命》曰：'学学半'其此之谓乎！"，该丛书涵盖英美文学、比较文学、文化研究、翻译理论与实践、语言学、英语教学等诸多领域，它们大多是教与学过程中诞生的成果，有的是各方向学科带头人多年积累的成果，有的是教师在教学实践中新的体会，有的是青年教师的博士论文扩充的论著。尽管各自研究的题目不同，但都跟教与学相关，且教与学相长，并永无涯也，该丛书既是科研成果的汇总，又是相互的永远激励。故该丛书命名为"学学半"。

是为序。

蒋洪新

于长沙岳麓山，二〇〇九年六月

Abstract

Tense and the perfect aspect are essential grammatical categories of English verbs, and the literature on them at home and abroad is abundant but of different views. Although it is commonly agreed that tense has various uses in English, few scholars have seriously studied the relations among those uses, fewer scholars have tried to study the polysemy of the present perfect aspect and that of the past perfect aspect from the perspective of the semantic interactions between tense and the perfect aspect based on the polysemy of tense, and from such a perspective even fewer scholars have tried to figure out a consistent and reasonable explanation to some syntactic and pragmatic constraints, e.g., "the present perfect puzzle" (Klein 1992), which have actually been bothering the English grammarians since long before and which are real nuts to crack. Therefore it is of both theoretical and practical significance to study the polysemy of tense and its semantic interactions with the perfect aspect.

First of all, with respect to the study of tense in English, three major viewpoints have been formed: (1) tense is a grammaticalised means of time-distinctions; (2) tense is a deictic category; (3) tense is one of the two grounding elements, and two consensuses have been reached: (1) there are two subcategories of tense in English, the past tense and the present tense, which are inflected with "-ed" and "-s/es/ø" correspondingly; (2) both the past tense and the present tense have various uses.

However, as for what relations exist among the various uses of the present tense and those of the past tense respectively, this book finds out four major drawbacks in the previous related studies: (1) with the adoption of the mood category, most scholars have cleverly avoided probing into the reason why the same verb inflection can be used to convey completely different meanings, which are seemingly of default homonymy (Jespersen 1924,

Poutsma 1926, Curme 1931, Bo Bing 2000, Zhang Daozhen 2002); (2) many scholars neglect to explore the relations among the different uses of the past tense or among those of the present tense although they list and describe its different uses (Quirk et al. 1985, Declerck 1991, 2006, Zhang Zhenbang 1997, Biber et al. 1999, Huddleston & Pullum 2002); (3) some scholars employ the strategy of abstraction in order to explain the various uses of the past tense or those of the present tense. Unfortunately, they haven't touched the interrelations among these uses either, nor illustrated the discrepancies of the distribution and productivity of those uses (Joos 1964, Palmer 1971, Leech 1978, Yi Zhongliang 1987, 1988b, 1999, Brisard 1997, 1999, 2002, Taylor 2002, etc.); (4) some scholars use the strategy of polysemy to study the different uses of the past tense or those of the present tense, however, because their study purpose is to test the feasibility of their theories instead of systematically expounding the tense of English verbs per se, their study of tense is not systematic, their study perspectives are not consistent either (Langacker 1991, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2009, 2011, Taylor 1995). Nevertheless, this book thinks all these studies are illuminating on the one hand; on the other hand, they are unable to offer a consistent explanation to the polysemy of the present tense and that of the past tense. Hence, it is necessary to advance studies in this respect.

Moreover, scholars vary in their viewpoints in the previous studies of the perfect aspect in English [have + (V)-en]. As for which grammatical category the form "have + (V)-en" should be classified into, three major opinions have been formed based on the meaning it expresses: (1) it is a subcategory of tense; (2) it is a subcategory of aspect paralleling to the progressive aspect; (3) it is neither a subcategory of tense nor that of aspect, but forms a new grammatical category, called "phase" (Palmer 1974), "formula" (Yi Zhongliang 1989, 1999), "secondary tense" (Huddleston & Pullum 2002), etc. This book thinks that the three classifications have both advantages and disadvantages of their own; however, their main and common drawbacks are that they fail to specify the grammatical meaning of the perfect aspect and use it to explain the uses of the finite forms of the perfect aspect (e.g., the present perfect aspect and the

past perfect aspect) in a consistent way.

Furthermore, in the previous studies of the present perfect aspect, a consensus has been reached that it can convey four distinct meanings: (1) universal perfect; (2) existential / experiencial perfect; (3) stative / resultative perfect; and (4) hot news perfect (McCawley 1971, Comrie 1976, Quirk et al. 1985, Binnick 1991, Declerck 1991, 2006, Zhang Zhenbang 1997, Biber et al. 1999, Huddleston & Pullum 2002, etc.). And five different theories have come into being in order to expound these four meanings or uses of the present perfect: the current relevance theory, the indefinite past theory, the extended now theory, the embedded past theory (c.f., McCoard 1978) and the perfect construction theory (Langacker 1991, 1999, 2009). Nevertheless, these five theories can neither explicate the interrelations among the four major meanings of the present perfect aspect, nor explain consistently and convincingly the so called "present perfect puzzle", "Wh-puzzle" and "Sequence of Tense Puzzle", and some other syntactic or pragmatic constraints in the use of the present perfect aspect.

In addition, concerning the study of the past perfect aspect, although scholars have unanimously agreed that its grammatical meaning is to express "past-in-the-past" (Quirk et al. 1985, Zhang Zhenbang 1997, Biber et al. 1999, Huddleston & Pullum 2002, etc.), such a grammatical meaning can not give a consistent explanation to the four distinct uses of the past perfect: (1) referring to a past state in the past; (2) referring to a past action in the past; (3) referring to an event that is supposed to have happened in the past, but the speaker thinks that is not true; (4) referring to a hope, expectation, supposition, etc., which has not been realized yet.

For the purpose of overcoming the above mentioned drawbacks in the previous studies of the present tense, the past tense, the present perfect aspect and the past perfect aspect, this book proposes the following three research questions:

(1) What are the relations between the basic grammatical meanings of the present tense and the past tense and their other grammatical meanings respectively?

(2) How can the grammatical category of the perfect aspect be defined in cognitive linguistics? And what are the semantic interactions between tense and the perfect aspect?

(3) What is a possible consistent and reasonable solution to "the present perfect puzzle" and some other related syntactic and pragmatic problems?

This book studies these research questions from the perspectives of the conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier 1985, 1994, 1997, Fauconnier & Turner 2002), the conceptual metaphor theory and the conceptual metonymy theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 2003, Indurkhya 1992, Barcelona 2000, Kövecses 2002, 2010). It first studies comprehensively the polysemy of the present tense and that of the past tense, explains consistently their various uses respectively, and constructs their respective radial polysemic model. Then it redefines the perfect aspect from the perspective of construal and profiling, on such a basis, it studies the polysemy of the present perfect aspect and that of the past perfect aspect through the detailed studies of the semantic interactions between the perfect aspect and the present tense or the past tense. In addition, it constructs their respective radial polysemic model and offers a comparatively consistent and convincing account for those syntactic and pragmatic constraints of the present perfect aspect.

This book mainly applies the qualitative research method. The major research data are from a large volume of relative literature by distinguished scholars at home and abroad, some are from the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and some are offered directly by American linguistic scholars to the author of this book when he discussed relative questions with them in the University of Oregon.

This book consists of three major parts: the study of the polysemy of the past tense, the study of the polysemy of the present tense, and the study of the semantic interactions between the perfect aspect and the present tense or the past tense.

The study of the polysemy of the past tense is focused on its four major different uses: (1) referring to past time; (2) referring to the anterior time in the future; (3) indicating hypothesis or counterfactuality; and (4) implying tentative

or polite attitude. In the course of our qualitative analysis of the relations among them, three respects are involved: (1) motivations for the relations among the four uses of the past tense; (2) infeasibility of the strategy of homonymy or abstraction; (3) arguing for a radial polysemic model of the past tense through metaphor and conceptual blending.

The study of the polysemy of the present tense is also concentrated on its four major distinct uses: (1) referring to present time; (2) referring to past time (the historical present); (3) referring to future time; and (4) referring to the present time in imaginary or fictional narratives. Our qualitative analysis of the relations among these four major groups of uses involves four respects: (1) making clear our interpretation of the present time; (2) motivations for the relations among the various uses of the present tense; (3) the enlightenment of epistemic immediacy as the basic meaning of the present tense; (4) arguing for a radial polysemic model of the present tense through metonymy and conceptual blending.

The study of the semantic interactions between tense and the perfect aspect are unwound from the following four sides: (1) a new construal of the perfect aspect and the construction of its image schema; (2) semantic interactions between the present tense and the perfect aspect; (3) semantic interactions between the past tense and the perfect aspect; (4) accounts for the present perfect puzzle and some other related syntactic and pragmatic constraints.

This book finally reports the following three principal findings through a cognitive linguistic investigation of the polysemy of tense and its semantic interactions with the perfect aspect in English:

(1) Revelation of a radial polysemic model of the past tense in English

The primary meaning of the past tense is "referring to the past time", which can be represented by the image schema of the distance between the moment of speaking and some point on its left side on the time axis. When this image schema is projected onto the right side of the moment of speaking, it signifies the "anterior time in the future time zone".

When this image schema of temporal distance and the image schema of

evolving reality in the epistemic domain (c.f, Langacker 1991, 2008, Radden & Dirven 2007) are taken as two input spaces, their elements are selectively projected onto a blend space, where another image schema of distance is created, which stands for the gap between the situation of an event described in language and the realitiy of that event. That represents the meaning of "hypothesis or counterfactuality" of the past tense. In addition, when the image schema of temporal distance and that of people's social relations based on their ethical, economic and social status in the social-cultural domain are regarded as two input spaces, the result of their conceptual integration is an image schema of social distance, which signifies the past tense's grammatical meaning of "tentative or polite attitude". Accordingly, the four distinct meanings of the past tense form a radial polysemic model:
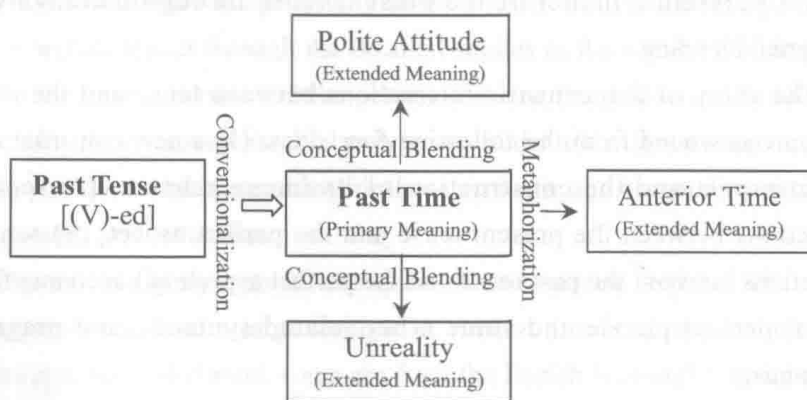

Figure 1: The radial polysemic model of the past tense in English

(2) Revelation of a radial polysemic model of the present tense in English

The primary meaning of the present tense is referring to the present time, which includes the moment of speaking and which can be short or long with the potentiality of stretching into the future. Cognitively speaking, this meaning actually profiles the psychological reality of the state or action expressed by a verb in context, in other words, based on his/her judgment at the moment of speaking, the speaker thinks that some action or state not only has reality in the past or at the present, but also has necessity in the future. Therefore, this

meaning can be represented by an image schema of "left-right endocentric mental association", "left" refers to "the left of the moment of speaking, that's past time", "right" "the right of the moment of speaking, that's future time", "endocentric mental association" refers to "the speaker at the moment of speaking connects in mind the reality of the situation both in the past and in the future" (c.f., Leech 1978, Yi Zhongliang 1988b, 1999, Chen Minzhe 2000, Chen Minzhe & Yi Jing 2008).

This primary meaning extends through metonymy into "left-endocentric mental association" and "right-endocentric mental association", the former indicates some described situation that in fact happened in the past but its psychological reality turns up in the speaker's mind at the moment of speaking, the latter suggests some described situation that will happen in the future but the speaker takes it as actuality at the moment of speaking based on his/her judgement. What's more, the three endocentric mental associations and their relations can all be metaphorically projected onto fictional domains, which enables the present tense to refer to imaginary situations in fictional narratives, stage directions, travelogue itinerary, the instruction booklet, etc. As a result, the four different meanings of the present tense also shape a radial polysemic model:
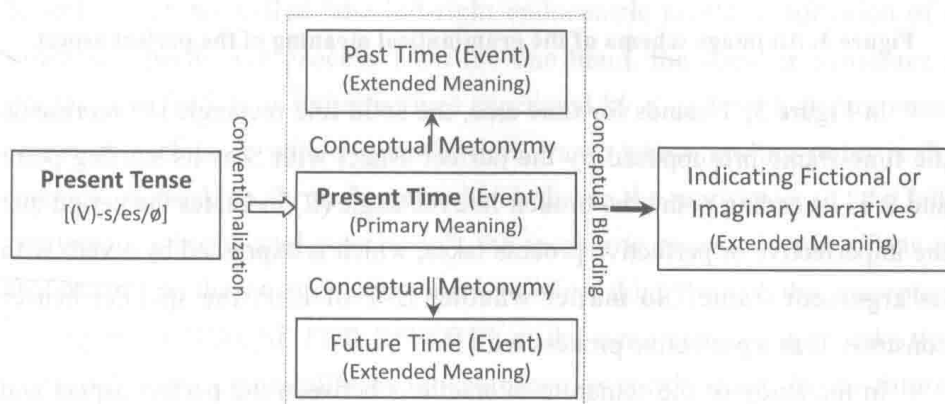

Figure 2: The radial model of the polysemy of the present tense in English

(3) Construction of the image schema of the perfect aspect, and the revelation of a radial polysemic model of the present perfect aspect and that of

the past perfect aspect and consistent and reasonable accounts for the present perfect puzzle and related problems.

The perfect aspect of English verbs is actually a grammatical category that *construes the process (no matter whether it is imperfective or perfective) expressed by any verb with its argument frame as perfective with a specific time frame.* It has three major features: (1) it is highly subjective; (2) the action or state it expresses has no direct relation to the moment of speaking; (3) it presupposes a specific time frame whose starting and ending points are usually grounded by context. Hence, we can figure out its image schema with reference to the image schemata of the aspectuality of verbs proposed by Langacker (1987a: 116-137, 1987b, 1999: 203-245).
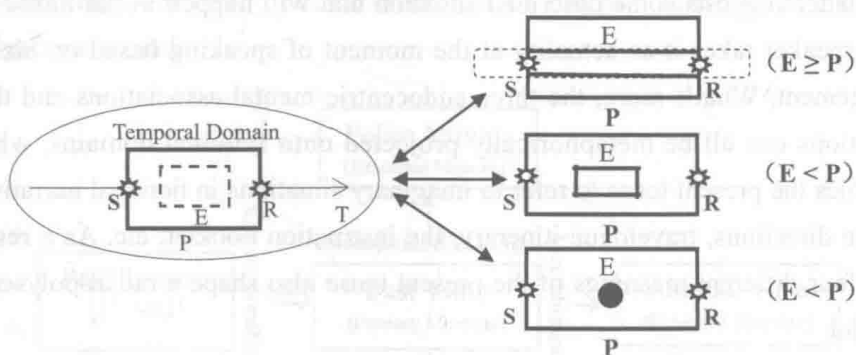

Figure 3: An image schema of the grammatical meaning of the perfect aspect

In Figure 3, T stands for time axis, the solid-line rectangle (P) represents the time frame presupposed by the perfect aspect with S as its starting point and R as its ending point, the broken-line rectangle (E) indicates the period that the imperfective or perfective process takes, which is expressed by a verb with its argument frame. No matter whether E<P or E≥P, the speaker/hearer construes E as a perfective process with P.

In the study of the semantic interactions between the perfect aspect and the present tense, we mainly uses the conceptual blending theory, and take the image schema of the perfect aspect and that of the "left-right endocentric mental association" of the present tense as two input spaces (c.f., Chapter 5, Figure 5.6). In the process of their conceptual integration, the frame of the

former is selectively projected into the blend as the organizing frame whose ending point R is valued with the moment of speaking O, which is selectively projected from the latter. Furthermore, the two arrows representing "left-right endocentric mental association" are also selectively projected into the blend. With the process of composition, completion and elaboration, a blend with emergent structure is created as shown in Figure 4.
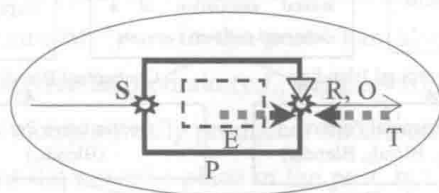

Figure 4: An image schema of the grammatical meaning of the present perfect aspect

In Figure 4, "�҂" means O has the value of the role R, which is one of the essential features of the present perfect aspect. E stands for the construed perfective process; its specification depends on the aspectuality of the verb with its argument frame. The two arrows pointing to the moment of speaking "...▸▽◂..." represent "the right-left endocentric mental association".

Figure 4 represents the central grammatical meaning of the present perfect aspect, which we called "the left-right endocentric mental association of a construed perfective process". On the one hand, the speaker construes a process (perfective or imperfective) expressed by a verb with its argument frame as perfective with a specific time frame whose ending point is the moment of speaking O, on the other hand, due to the motivation of "the left-right endocentric mental association", the speaker is aware of some effects of that process on the situation at the moment of speaking through the conceptual metonymy of "CAUSE FOR EFFECT", at the same time, he/she thinks that process has the potentiality of reoccurrence or continuation in the future. What's more, this central meaning extends into other meanings through metonymy. We can thus reveal a radial polysemic model of the present perfect aspect as follows:
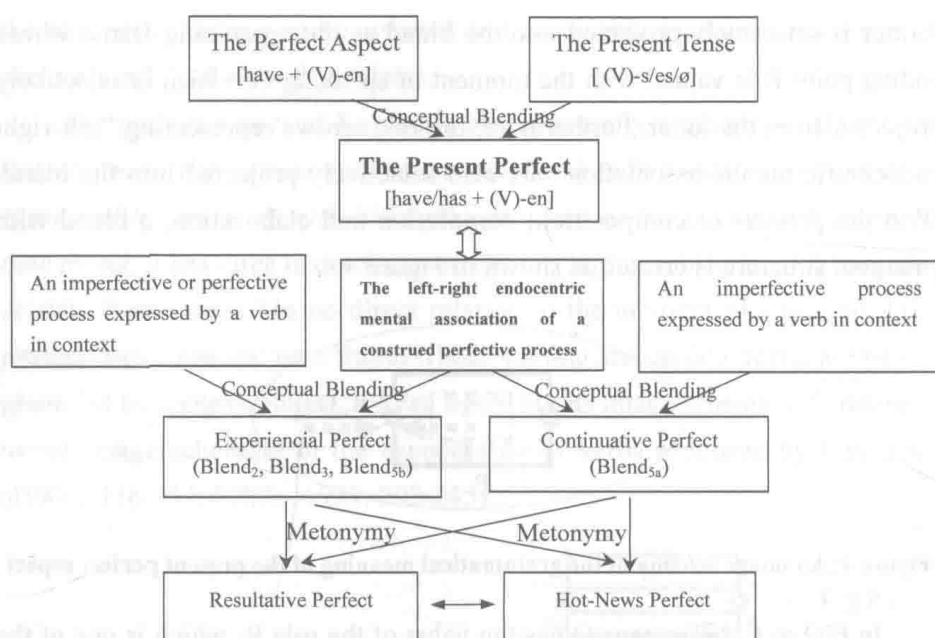
```
┌─────────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   The Perfect Aspect    │   │    The Present Tense    │
│      [have + (V)-en]    │   │      [ (V)-s/es/ø]      │
└─────────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────────┘
              Conceptual Blending
          ┌─────────────────────────┐
          │   The Present Perfect   │
          │    [have/has + (V)-en]  │
          └─────────────────────────┘
                      ⇕
```

An imperfective or perfective process expressed by a verb in context	**The left-right endocentric mental association of a construed perfective process**	An imperfective process expressed by a verb in context

Conceptual Blending   Conceptual Blending

Experiencial Perfect (Blend₂, Blend₃, Blend₅ᵦ)	Continuative Perfect (Blend₅ₐ)

Metonymy   Metonymy

Resultative Perfect	⟷	Hot-News Perfect

Figure 5: A radial polysemic model of the present perfect aspect

Hence, this book offers a consistent and reasonable account for the puzzles mentioned above and some other syntactic or pragmatic constraints, related to the present perfect aspect (c.f., section 6.5).

Besides, in the study of the semantic interactions of the perfect aspect and the past tense, this book also principally employs the conceptual blending theory. By taking the image schema of distance of the past tense and Figure 3 as two input spaces, it constructs a blend with an emergent structure, shown in Figure 6, which represents the the primary grammatical meaning of the past perfect aspect. It is called "the temporal distance between the moment of speaking and a construed perfective process in the past", i.e., "past-in-the-past". On the one hand, the speaker construes a process (perfective or imperfective) expressed by a verb with its argument frame as perfective with a specific time frame whose ending point locates on the left side of the moment of speaking O, on the other hand, due to the motivation of "distance", marked by the arrow from O to R, the speaker just describes a past event in the past, paying no attention to its connections with the moment of speaking.
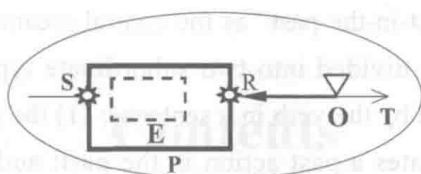
Figure 6: An image schema of the past perfect aspect, referring to "past-in-the-past"

Similar to the way the past tense extends its primary grammatical meaning, the conceptual structure of "past-in-the-past" can also be metaphorically projected into the counterfactual domain (c.f., Figure 4.6), thus a corresponding conceptual structure is metaphorically produced. Such a conceptual structure can represent a process that did not take place in the past, but the speaker supposes that the process happened for some reasons; such a conceptual structure can also represent a hope, a thought, a desideration, etc. that the speaker held in the past, but that has not been realized till the moment of speaking, and that seems unable to be realized in the future based on some judgement. Therefore, the grammatical meaning of "counterfactuality" or "hypothesis" of the past perfect aspect comes into being. As a result, we can figure out a radial polysemic model of the past perfect aspect displayed in Figure 7.
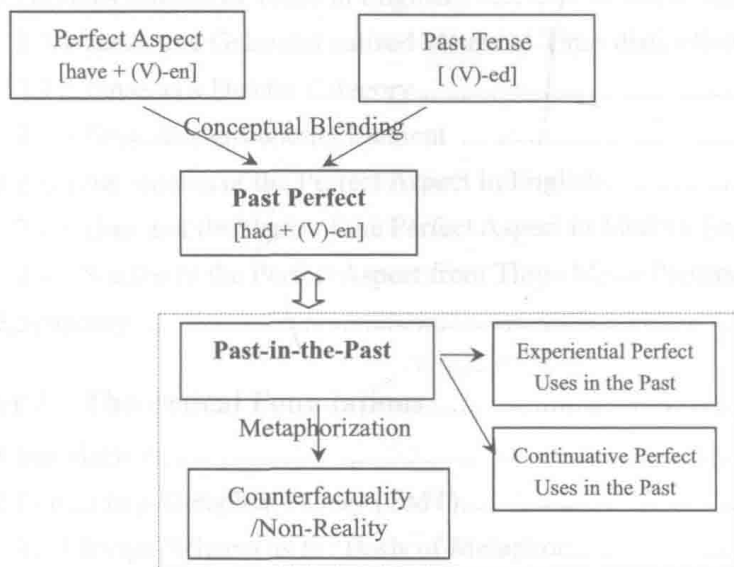

Figure 7: A radial polysemic model of the past perfect in English