Why *Go* Doesn't Have Two Past Participles

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ABSTRACT

The present paper argues that tradirionalist-inspired claims (e.g., Swan 1980) alleging rhar the past paniciple been (to) *is in allomorphic altemarion wirh* gone (to) *are unsubstantiated by the facrs. First, ir is shown rhar* gone to *and* been to *are semanrically distinct. Then, it is postulated thar the preposition* to *is polysemous in the domain of space and that this polysemy accounts for its ability to collocare with* been. *Finally, it is suggested rhar, unlike* gone to, been to *belongs ro an idiomatic grammatical construcrion. which helps to explain the differences in distribution between the two expressions. Taken as a whole, rhese arguments strongly indicate that* been (to) *is categorized as an instance of* be *and not as an allomorph of* go.

KEY WORDS: *Been to*, *gone to*, grammatical constmctions, construcrion grammar, prepositional polysemy.

RESUMEN

Cienos autores inscritos en una línea tradicionalista (p. ej., Swan 1980) alegan que el inglés been (to) *es un participio de pasado en alternancia con* gone (to); *el presente articulo arguye, sin embargo, que una examinación derallada de los datos lingüísticos resta credibilidad a tal posibilidad. En primer lugar, se demuestra que* gone to *y* been to *son semánticamente distintos. En segundo lugar, se postula que la preposición* to *es polisémica en el dominio del espacio y es jusramente esta polisemia la que permite la combinación* been + to. *Finalmente, se sugiere que, a diferencia de* gone to, been to *constituye una construcción gramatical idiomática. lo que ayuda a explicar las diferencias de distribución que existen enrre las dos expresiones en cuestión. Considerados en su globalidad, estos argumentos indican que* been (to) *se categoriza en realidad como una forma de* be *y no como un alomorfo de* go.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Been ro, gone to*, constmcciones gramaticales, gramática de constmcciones, polisemia preposiriva.

I. THE IMPLICIT ARGUMENT

Every once in a while one hears from traditionalist-inspired grammarians that *go* has two past participles (see, e.g., Swan 1980, $101). Though no explicit arguments are offered to substantiate this claim, the basis for it probably rests on grammaticality judgments such as those in (1) and (2).

(1)   a. Henry Hinkleweenie often goes to Arizona.
        b. Henry Hinkleweenie went to Arizona last year.
        c. Henry Hinkleweenie has gone to Arizona only a few times since he got married.

(2)   a. * Henry Hinkleweenie is to Arizona all the time.
        b. * Henry Hinkleweenie was to Arizona last month.
        c. Henry Hinkleweenie has been to Arizona once in the past ten years.

Given the distribution of the data set,[1] the argument would, speciously, take the following form:

> *Primo:* in contrast to *go, be* is defective when it collocates with spatial *to;*
> *Secundo:* speakers should agree that *been to* and *gone to* are
>   synonymous, since
> *Tertio: to* **+** *PLACE* implies movement —ergo, *been* does also;
> THEREFORE:
> *Quarto: been* is an alternate past participle of the verb *go.*

I believe that this account of the facts is flawed on several counts, not the least of which have to do with such fundamental questions as synonymy, polysemy, and grammatical constructions. I take up these matters each in turn and show that *been* is not an alternate past participle belonging to *go.*

II. SYNONYMY

The first flaw in the above argument relates to the implication that *gone to* and *been to* are synonymous with one another. This means, in other words, that sentences such as those in (3) should be semantically identical.

(3)   a. Ren and Stimpy have gone to Nepal several times.
        b. Ren and Stimpy have been to Nepal several times.

Despite these initial appearances, it is well known that *gone to* and *been to* do not convey quite the same meaning. This is borne out by the differences in interpretation regarding examples such as (4):

(4)   a. Ren and Stimpy have gone to the office.
        b. Ren and Stimpy have been to the office.

Let us start with sentence (4a). This sentence has at least two plausible default interpretations. One interpretation is, roughly, that Ren and Stimpy have departed from wherever they were and are now on their way to the office. Another possibility is that they have reached the office and *they are still there.* This differs from the interpretation of (4b), which is that they have gone to the office, but *they are no longer there.* This point is perhaps more clearly illustrated in (5).

(5)   a. Ren and Stimpy have gone to Italy for the month.
        b. * Ren and Stimpy have been to Italy for the month

Example (5b) is unacceptable because the semantics of *been to* clashes with that of *for the month*. This clash is due to the fact that *been to* implies specifically that Ren and Stimpy are no longer in Italy, whereas *for the month* suggests that they currently are. (To put it in less impressionistic terms, it is impossible to "be and then no longer be" at the same place during the same time span.) By contrast, in example (5a), the semantic structure of the two relevant constituents does not clash. On the present account, *gone to* is in perfect consonance with *for the month,* since they both indicate that Ren and Stimpy are currently in Italy.

This still invites the question of why sentences such as (3a) and (3b) seem to be very close semantically? Such sentences resemble each other because they convey basically the same **conceptual content** (in the sense of Langacker 1987, 1990, 1991). They contrast subtly with one another, however, in the way they portray this conceptual content. In this connection, consider the variations of sentences (3) proposed in (6):

·(6)   a. Ren and Stimpy have gone to the Clinton White House a few times.
         b. Ren and Stimpy have been to the Clinton White House a few times.

What makes the meanings of examples (6a) and (6b) so similar is the fact that the adverbial *a few times* denotes that the actions were "recurrent." In essence, then, both sentences describe arrivals at (as well as departures from) the White House. This, I believe, is the basis for the apparent synonymy of these examples.

While sentences such as (6a) and (6b) are semantically quite comparable, they are not exactly identical. It is true that they both represent the same event; however, they do so by perspectivizing different facets of the situation. For example, in (6a) *gone to* highlights the goal-oriented trajectory of Ren and Stimpy, which ends up at the White House. In sentence (6b), on the other hand, *been to* emphasizes the presence of Ren and Stimpy at a place located at the endpoint of the trajectory.[2] That is, though a prior trajectory is implicit in the semantic structure of *been to,* the expression does not profile a trajectory *per se.* Therefore, even though the same circumstances are being described in both cases, the two sentences carry slightly different nuances of construal. I will explore this observation further in the following section.

III. POLYSEMY

Another flawed aspect of the two-participle argument has to do with the meaning of the preposition *to*. Though *to* has yet to be given a full description. most accounts of this

preposition do not even entertain the possibility that, in the domain of space, it might not be monosemous. In this section I will show that spatial to is actually polysemous. This overlooked detail has significant consequences for distinguishing *been* to from gone to.

In its prototypical sense, the preposition to highlights the goal portion of an entire trajectory (cf. Hilferty 1993, Taylor 1993). This can be seen by considering the following example:

(7)   Ray Cokes went to a London pub.

In this sentence, to a London pub designates the goal section of some larger unspecified trajectory. (Common sense dictates that Ray Cokes had to start his trajectory from somewhere). However, when to collocates with *been* in what I shall call the *been* to-construction, then, it does not convey exactly the same meaning as in (7). Rather than highlighting the approach towards the goal, it instead focuses on the very endpoint of the trajectory. This remark merits some clarification.

Endpoint-focus phenomena have been well documented for English path prepositions (e.g., Bennett 1975, Lakoff 1987, Taylor 1993, inter *alia*). Consider the contrast in examples (8)-(10). In each of the (a) sentences, the subject effects some sort of movement along a path.

(8)   a. Ray Cokes walked over the hill.
         b. Ray Cokes lives over the hill.

(9)   a. Ray Cokes ran across the street.
         b. Ray Cokes lives across the street.

(10)   a. Ray Cokes skipped past the supermarket.
         b. Ray Cokes lives past the supermarket.

In the (b) sentences, on the other hand, no such movement is expressed; in these cases, the subject is merely located on the other side of the place indicated by the prepositional object. Such data provides some independent motivation for assigning an endpoint-focus sense to to. If I am correct, this static reading of to does not really underscore the movement toward the endpoint of the goal trajectory. On the contrary, in the context of the *been* to-constmction I would contend that to focuses on the endpoint itself.

While Deane (1993) specifically denies the possibility that spatial to might have an endpoint-focus sense, the *been* to-constmction seems to suggest otherwise. This said, however, I should hasten to add it is obvious that to cannot combine with all sorts of "motionless" verbs. In fact, this use of *to* is not very productive at all:

(11)   a. Bill walked to the store.
         b. * Bill works to the store.
         c. * Bill lives to the store.

Despite its limited productivity, the use of to described for the *been* to-constmction is by no means arbitrary. It is motivated by the obvious fact that to be in a location you must have

previously gone there. The restricted distribution of endpoint-focus to points to the need for special treatment of *been* to. I take the matter up in the next section.

In any event. there **does** exist additional **evidence** supporting the analysis advanced here. For one thing, in a conventional construction such as to the *left/right* of X, the preposition to is perfectly felicitous as the marker of a static relationship.

(12)   a. In this picture, Chelsea is standing to the left of Hilary.
         b. **Bill's** picture is to the right of Hilary's picture.

For another, there are examples such as those in (13), indicating 'attachment' (cf. Lindkvist 1950, §638 ff):

(13)   a. The gum was stuck to the bottom of the table (by **Bill**).
         b. The gum was stuck to the bottom of the table (and there was no way to get it off).

Such uses **allow** for passive-voice and stative interpretations (examples (13a) and (13b), respectively). On the passive interpretation, the gum is conceived as going roughly from an OFF-relationship to an ON-relationship with regard to the table. On the stative interpretation, change of place is not explicitly denoted, but entailed. Taken together, examples such as (12) and (13b) **provide** good motivation for positing a static endpoint-focus use of to.

The import of ascribing an endpoint-focus sense to to is that *been* maintains its stative meaning in the *been* to-construction. This is a plausible solution, since it is consonant with native-speaker intuitions: gone to stresses 'going,' whereas *been* to stresses 'being.' On the basis of meaning, then, it is difficult to make the case that *been* (to) is an alternate participle of *go*.[3] Now let us turn to a final argument against the stance that go has two past participles.

IV. GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTIONS

The third point on which the two-participle position **fails** has to do with the nature of grammatical constructions. There exists a trend in current linguistic theory that seeks to explain language in terms of simultaneous syntax and semantics and which are aptly described as construction-based **frameworks**.[4] Such an approach to language describes the regularities (and "irregularities") of linguistic structure as sets of form-meaning pairings. This view affords a fundamental insight for idiomatic expressions that are less **than fully** productive. **Learned** and stored in memory as semantico-gramatical "chunks," such expressions are deemed to be special **grammatical** constructions, whose overall structure is noncompositional. The idiomatic **patterns** of a language are therefore **seen** as possessing Gestalt qualities, in that they are not the sum of their component parts.

A case in point is of course the *been* to-constmction, which clearly is not the mere sum of *been* + *to*. We **have** already described the idiosyncratic semantics of the construction in the two previous sections, so there is no need to **belabor** the matter **here**. Instead, I will offer a very rough picture of what the syntax of the constmction looks like. At the highest **level** of generalization, this construction probably takes the form of:

(14)   [[have$_{aux}$] [[been] [[to] [PLACE$_{NP}$]]]]

While the representation used in (14) is a simplifíed rendering of the *been* to-constniction,
it is sufficient for present purposes. What it is meant to convey is a verb phrase headed by
auxiliary *have*, which takes *been* + to as its obligatory complement.[5] Of special importance
here is the fact that not all the "slots" have a lexically filled terminal node. This is the case
of the constituent marked [PLACE,,], which licenses any noun phrase whose semantics is that
of a place. So, like most other constructions, the *been* to-construction is a cross between
lexical, syntactic, and semantic information.

      Now, the upshot of (14) is that the *been* to-constniction obeys the rules of "perfect"
constructions, i.e., it can only be productively in the perfect tenses (e.g., the present perfect
and the past perfect), as in (15):

(15)   a. Present perfect: Henry Hinkleweenie has never been to Berserkeley.
       b. Past perfect: Henry Hinkleweenie told me that he had been to Hell once but he
           really didn't like it.

Gone (to), on the other hand, belongs to spatial go. This is significant because it suggests
that go *(to)* should display full productivity, namely that it should be able to be used without
any problem in all active-voice tenses. This is in fact corroborated by the grammaticality
judgments in (1). Thus, the differing distributions of go and be in examples (1) and (2).
respectively, are fully explainable via the constructions that they belong to.

      As further proof for the proposal presented herein, consider the case of elided
questions, such as the following:

(16)   a. Gone to the office yet?
       b. Go to the office yet?

(17)   a. Been to the office yet?
       b. * Be to the office yet?

The present account predicts the ungrarnmaticality of (17b), because there seems to be no
stable be to-construction to sanction it. On the other hand, the grammaticality of the
corresponding go to-sequence in (16b) is assured (in American English), since it needs no
licensing by a special constniction. Thus, the "defective" distribution of *been* to falls out
directly from the constructional restrictions it is subject to.

      Now, the foregoing remarks should not be taken as saying that gone *(to)* does not
participate in the present- and past-perfect constnictions. Of course it does. What I do mean
to say is that be is only able to collocate productively with spatial to through the *been* to-
construction (which, no doubt, is a very specific variant of the perfect constructions). These
observations suggest strongly that there is no need to posit an ad-hoc allomorphic relationship
claiming that *been* is an alternate past participle of go.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Contrary to what is sometimes asserted, *go* does not have two past participles, but oniy one: *gone.* The sequence *been to,* far from being an alternant of *gone (to),* belongs instead to aspecific grarnrnatical construction, which is endowed with its own particular syntax and semantics. This, I contend, is the basis for its "defective" distribution. As is often the case with grarnmatical constructions, *been to* is not the literal sum of its parts and therefore cannot profitably be analyzed as such. Oniy by analyzing *been to* as an idiomatic construction with its own semantico-syntactic constraints can one come to a natural and realistic account that accords with native-speaker intuitions. Bearing this in mind, it seems clear that the past participles *been* and *gone* do not constitute a case of allomorphy. Instead they are, just as common sense would predict, the past participles of *be* and *go,* respectively.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

1. While (2a) and (2b) are clearly unacceptable, Lindkvist (1950, §616) states that it is possible to encounter *be to* + PLACE in tenses other than the present and the past perfect. In fact, he adduces an attested example in which a simple form of *be* is (apparently) used with the spatial preposition *to*:

(i)   Ferdy, having the common love of a free show, was one of the first *to* the rails; he had a
        good place in the front row. (taken from Lindkvist 1950: 312: the italics are Lindkvist's)

Observe, however, that *to the rails* actually forms a constituent with *(one of) the first* and therefore cannot truly be considered an instance of *be to*. This is shown by (ii), where the prepositional phrase must be integrated as pan of the noun phrase.

(ii)   a. * One of the first was Ferdy to the rails.
        b. One of the first to the rails was Ferdy.

Lindkvist's point is nevertheless well taken. For instance, it seems to me that, given the right context, most native speakers of American English would not "bat an eyelash" if they were to hear a sentence such as (iii) in the stream of discourse.

(iii)   ? It was getting really late and we were only to Santa Fe.

In the context of explaining a trip whose final destination was supposed to be somewhere beyond the capital of New Mexico, sentence (iii) would probably not sound very odd. However, there must be some clear contextual or situational cue indicating that the object of *to* is merely a subdestination: otherwise, such uses are unacceptable. This accounts for the infelicity of (iv):

(iv)   * We were to Santa Fe and we stayed there.

At present, I have embarrassingly little to say about the matter (though see note 5), other than to note that sentences such as (iii) pose an additional difficulty for any analysis that claims that *been (to)* is a form of *go*.

2. As we have seen, *been to* also carries the conventional implicature that the grammatical subject is no longer at the site indicated by the prepositionai object. In the case of (6b), this connotation is spelled out more explicitly by the reiterative adverbial of frequency *a few times.*

3. It should be noted that I am not claiming that it is impossible for a verb to have two past paniciples, each with different meanings. As is well known, in American English ger has two past participles: *got* and gorren.

(v)   a. Have you got enough money?

        b. I'm sorry; I've really got to go now.

(vi)   a. Have you gotten my letter in the mail yet?

        b. You mean you still haven't gotten there yet?

Though no doubt there is a certain amount of variation, the "pseudo-past participle" *got* is generally used to express possession and obligation (e.g., examples (v)), whereas the tme past paniciplegorren usually expresses meanings akin to receiving, arriving, and other vaiues associated with ger (e.g., examples (vi)). Given the similarity of phonological forms, counting gor and gorren as past participles of *get* is quite natural. *Been* and gone, on the other hand, bear little phonological resemblance to one another; suppletion notwithstanding, such a putative allomorphic relationship would have little claim to naturalness.

4. See. especially, Fillmore and Kay's Constmction Grammar framework (e.g., Bmgman 1988, 1996. Fillmore 1985, 1986, 1988, 1996, Fillmore & Atkins 1992, Fillmore & Kay *in progress*, Fillmore et al. 1988, Goldberg 1994, 1995, 1996, Kay 1984, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994. 1997, Koenig 1993, 1995, Michaelis 1994. Michaelis & Lambrecht 1994, 1996a, 1996b, Valenzuela 1996). See, also, Lakoff's Cognitive Semantics approach (e.g., Lakoff 1987, Goldberg 1992) and Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (e.g., Langacker 1987, 1990, 1991, Achard 1993). For funher arguments in favor of construction-based grammars, see Bates & Goodman in *press* and Jackendoff (1995, 1997: ch. 7).

5. Unfortunately, this formulation does not explain example (iii) in note 1. A complete account would ultimately have to explain the possibility of such a use in discourse (for American English at least, though apparently not for British English). As a first approximation to the problem, I would speculate rhat examples such as (iii) only exist as extrapolations (i.e., as *extensions* rarher than *instantiations*) from the schema proposed in (14). These extrapolations would probably be anaiogical in character and based on other verb-phrase pattems (perhaps on that of go *to*). This would account, at least in pan, for the very slight oddness of such utterances, since the grammatical construction they would presuppose would have to be assembled "on the fly" and therefore would lack cognitive entrenchment (see Langacker 1987, 1990, 1991 for the notion of entrenchment).

        Another aspect of this construction that deserves mentioning is the fact that it does not account for examples in which the preposition ro does not appear.

(vii)   a. She hasn't been to Logroño; she's been somewhere else.

        b. Where have you been all this time?

        c. To tell you the tmth, I've never been there.

        d. I've been home twice today.

It is imponant to note that rhis same phenomenon happens with other verbs (though in varying degrees. to be sure). A smattering of examples can be found in (viii):

(viii) a. She hasn't gone to Logroño; she's gone somewhere else.

        b. Where are you going?

        c. No. I've never driven there before.

        d. I've already run home twice today.

In any event. the preposition ro cannot be omitted from the *been* ro-constmction without allowing for an ungrammatical sequence such as:

(ix)   * I've been San Francisco.

My tentative proposal for the *been to*-constmction would be to say that the preposition *to* can be overridden by cenain lexical items such as where, somewhere, *some* place, *there*, horne, etc.   This amounts to listing exceptions and I will not endeavor to work the matter out any further.

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