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Say It Right

With Denyse Tessensohn

Reader's question

Christine Wong asks which is correct:

- (1) He has spoken to me about it, or
- (2) He had spoken to me about it.

Answer: Both are correct, depending on the context. The grammatical rule here concerns the use of the "perfect aspect" that refers back to a previous action in time. You would use "has", "had" or "have" with a verb. In (1) the present perfective aspect is being used, and in (2) the past perfective aspect.

Examples: 1. Do you know about the new initiative from the boss? A: Yes, he has spoken to me about it. 2. Had you been told about the changes? A: Yes, he had spoken to me about them.

We will answer some of your spoken English language questions in this column, and a book prize will be awarded weekly for the question, anecdote or suggestion most useful to our readers.

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