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The meaning of the concrete future tense in Turkish and Mongolian languages

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Abstract

This study offers a systematic comparative analysis of the concrete future tense in Turkish and Mongolian, addressing a notable research gap in the aspectual-temporal systems of these languages. The primary objective is to identify and contrast the morphological markers, semantic nuances, and contextual constraints that govern the expression of concrete future events, with particular emphasis on special meanings that form binary oppositions and reveal language-specific functional distinctions. Methodologically, the research employs a contrastive approach, analyzing contextualized examples from both languages, with a focus on the Turkish suffixes *-AcAk* and *-Ir* and the Mongolian suffix *-nA*. The investigation highlights how these morphological elements interact with specific syntactic and lexical environments to convey future events as concrete, non-habitual occurrences. The results demonstrate that Turkish primarily utilizes *-AcAk* for concrete future reference, while *-Ir* serves a secondary role in limited contexts, whereas Mongolian relies on *-nA* to denote events occurring after the moment of speech. Both languages require additional temporal localization through adverbs or discourse context to exclude habitual or repetitive interpretations. Furthermore, the study reveals that verbs expressing concrete future often exhibit Aktionsart properties of either generally unlimited activity or accomplishment. These findings contribute to the field of comparative aspectology by elucidating the intricate relationship between grammatical form, context and semantic interpretation. They provide new insights into the typological characteristics of aspectual-temporal expressions in Turkic and Mongolic languages. Keywords: language function, grammatical meanings, aspect and tense, aspectual-temporal special meaning, concrete factuality, concrete future, Turkish, Mongolian, context, temporal adverbials

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Оригинальная научная статья

Значение конкретного будущего времени в турецком и монгольском языках

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Аннотация

Данная статья представляет систематический сравнительный анализ конкретного будущего времени в турецком и монгольском языках, восполняющий существенный пробел в изучении аспектуально-временных систем данных языков. Основная цель работы – выявление и сопоставление морфологических маркеров, семантических нюансов и контекстуальных ограничений, регулирующих выражение конкретной будущности, с особым акцентом на специальных значениях, формирующих бинарные оппозиции и раскрывающих языково-специфические функциональные различия. Методологически исследование основывается на контрастивном анализе контекстуализированных примеров из обоих языков с фокусом на турецких суффиксах *-AcAk* и *-Ir* и монгольском суффиксе *-nA*. Результаты демонстрируют, что турецкий язык преимущественно использует суффикс *-AcAk* для выражения конкретной будущности, в то время как *-Ir* выполняет второстепенную роль в ограниченных контекстах, тогда как монгольский язык применяет суффикс *-nA* для обозначения событий, происходящих после момента речи. Оба языка требуют дополнительной темпоральной локализации через наречия или дискурсивный контекст для исключения хабитуальных или повторяющихся интерпретаций. Кроме того, исследование выявляет, что глаголы, выражающие конкретную будущность, часто проявляют свойства Aktionsart либо неограниченной деятельности, либо достижения. Полученные результаты вносят вклад в развитие сравнительной аспектологии, проясняя сложные взаимоотношения между грамматической формой, контекстом и семантической интерпретацией, а также предоставляя новые данные о типологических характеристиках аспектуально-временных выражений в тюркских и монгольских языках.

Ключевые слова: языковая функция, грамматические значения, аспект и время, аспектуально-временное специальное значение, конкретная фактичность, конкретное будущее, турецкий, монгольский, контекст, временные наречия

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Introduction

In the concrete process of language function, grammatical meanings emerge as the word forms in which the members of a category participate together. The form of the word requires that the entire group of linguistic meanings be actualized in each instance [1, p. 109–110]. Here, the integrity of meaning can result from the intersection of different categories that mutually affect each other. However, aspect and tense maintain their own identities as separate categories. At several points, aspect and tense intersect and become mutually linked and dependent.

One of the most important features of the relationship between aspectual and temporal categories is that these two categories can combine in the context of a unified aspect-tense meaning. We call this phenomenon an “aspectual-temporal special meanings.” Special meanings, which express the combined meaning of the aspectual and temporal categories in aspectual–temporal forms, can form an integrity of meaning in which the constituent parts are in harmony.

Results and Discussion

In Turkish and Mongolian, this aspectual-temporal special meaning emerges from the combination of the concrete factuality of the general aspect and the concrete future meaning of the future tense. This meaning indicates an event as a concrete and independent phenomenon that will occur in the future [2, p. 302, 292].

This meaning appears in different types of contexts, and even a minimal context is sufficient. The context should not contain elements that imply repeatability or habitual action. The meaning is temporally localized when explained.

In Turkish, the concrete future is expressed by the suffixes *-AcAk* and *-Ir*. The *-AcAk* suffix most commonly conveys this meaning; therefore, it will be referred to as the “future tense” [3, p. 65] or as a “future morpheme” [4, p. 188]. This suffix denotes an action that has not yet been realized and points to a time after the moment of speech and after the time described [4, p. 188].

The concrete future suffix *-Ir* does not carry the primary future meaning, but it is sometimes used in the sense of the concrete future [3, p. 462; 4, p. 190]. In particular, the *-Ir* suffix indicates future time and typically requires adverbials such as *bu gece* “tonight,” *yarın sabah* “tomorrow morning,” or *iki üç ay* “two to three months,” which temporally locate the event.

The Mongolian *-nA* future suffix is used to express both broad time and present time, but in some contexts it specifically conveys a concrete future meaning [5, p. 162; 6, p. 80; 7, p. 186; 8, p. 203–204].

T. Banguoğlu writes that in Turkish the future mood (general future *-AcAk* form) denotes an action that has not yet been realized and refers to a time after the moment of speech (indicatif du futur) [3, p. 465, 462]. The extensive time (indicatif de l'aoriste) is sometimes also used with a future meaning. For example:

(1) *Yedi buçukta Kastamonu'ya varacağız.*

‘We will arrive in Kastamonu at seven-thirty.’

(2) *Ne zaman taşınacaksın?*

‘When will you move?’

(3) *Peki, anlatırım.*

‘Well, I’ll tell you.’

D. Aksan notes that in Turkish the future morpheme indicates that the action will occur after the present time and is used to describe the future within a broad time frame [4, p. 188–190]. For example:

(4) *Haftaya Giresun'a gidecek.*

‘He will go to Giresun next week.’

(5) *Kitabı altı ay sonra bitireceğim.*

‘I will finish the book in six months.’

(6) *Yazın çarşıya çıkar, istediklerini alırsız.*

‘In the summer we will go to the bazaar and buy what we want.’

(7) *Tatil geliyor, rahatlırsınız.*

‘The holiday is coming; you will relax.’

J. Sanjaa states that in Halha Mongolian the *-nA* tense suffix (general future form) expresses an event that will occur after the moment of speech [5, p. 162]. For example:

(8) *Дайны гал тэнгэрийн бороонд унтрахгүй нь магад, харин энэ галыг дэлхийн хүн төрөлхтөн унтраана. Монголын ард түмэн унтра-алцана.*

‘Surely the fire of war will not be extinguished by the rain of the sky, but humankind will extinguish it, and the Mongolian people will help extinguish it.’

M. Bazarragchaa notes that in Mongolian the suffix *-nA* (general future) refers to a time after the moment of speech (*тодорхой ирээдүй* ‘certain future’) [6, p. 80]. For example:

(9) *Харин би нөгөөдрөөс хөдөө явна.*

‘But I will go to the countryside the day after tomorrow.’

(10) *Чи ч бичнэ биз.*

‘You may write.’

(11) *Эцсийн өдрийн жаргалыг эрхгүй чамтайгаа хуваана.*

‘We will surely share the happiness of the last day with you.’

G.D. Sanjeyev explains that the form of the unfinished present (имперфектный презент) in Mongolian can convey a future meaning in the appropriate context [7, p. 186]. For example:

(12) *Би энэ замаар очно.*

‘I will go this way.’

Ts. Onorbayan states that in Mongolian the future tense form *-на*, when attached to the verb stem, indicates a time after the moment of speech [8, p. 203-204]. For example:

(13) *Манай хүү удахгүй цэргийн албанд мордоно.*

‘Our son will soon leave for military service.’

(14) *Эрдэм ном сайн сурвал эх орондоо их үйл бүтээнэ.*

‘If we study well, we will accomplish great work for our country.’

In the following examples, the concrete future aspectual-temporal special meaning is revealed without the support of additional context:

Turkish

(15) *Ev zaten çoktan rehinde, ilk kurtulabileceğimizle gideceğiz. Seni Galatasaray’a vereceğiz, dadınla Gulboy kadını götüreceğim, ötekileri savarız, Ahmet Ağa da gelecek.*

‘The house is already in pawn; we will leave as soon as we can get free. We will give you to Galatasaray, I will take the Gulboy woman with the nanny, we will drive the others away, and Ahmet Ağa will come.’ [9, p. 132].

(16) *Hayır. Ben burada meşgulum. Mideyi kaynatsınlar. Ben sonra gelir, bakarım.*

‘No. I’m busy here. Let them boil the stomach. I will come later and look.’ [9, p. 100].

(17) *Düşüncenize katılmıyorum, fakat onu söyleme ve savunma hakkınızı sonuna kadar destekleyeceğim.*

‘I do not agree with your opinion, but I will fully support your right to speak and defend it.’ [10, p. 335].

Mongolian

(18) *Монгол орны түүхэнд шинэ үе эхэлнэ. Ард түмэн эрх олж улсын эзэн болно.*

‘A new era will begin in the history of Mongolia. The people will gain freedom and become masters of their country.’ [11, p. 342].

(19) *Дархан манай хувьсгалт улс / Даяар монголын ариун голомт / Дайсны хөлд хэзээ ч орохгүй / Дандаа энхжин үүрд мөнхжинө.*

‘Saintly revolutionary country of ours, the sacred hearth of all the Mongols, will never fall under the enemy’s feet; it will always prosper and endure forever.’ [12].

In these Turkish examples – *gideceğiz, vereceğiz, götüreceğim, savarız, gelecek, gelir, bakarım* – and Mongolian examples – *эхэлнэ, болно, мөнхжинө* – the general future forms express events that will take place in the future.

It is noteworthy that verbs expressing the concrete future often display an Aktionsart of either (i) generally unlimited activity, where the point of conclusion is arbitrary, or (ii) accomplishment, in which the action consists of processes and stages.

In the next examples, the concrete future aspectual-temporal special meaning is expressed with the help of lexical (temporal) adverbials:

Turkish

(20) *Salih bu gece yola çıkar. Biz de cümbür cemaat yarın sabah Hocaefendiye gideriz.*

‘Salih leaves tonight. Our whole group will also go to Hocaefendi tomorrow morning.’ [13, p. 175].

(21) *İki üç ay sıkıntı çekeceğim... Mecburi Şemseddinle burun buruna kalacağım.*

‘I will suffer for two or three months ... I will inevitably come face-to-face with Şemseddin.’ [14, p. 126].

(22) *Ve biliyorum ki bir gün o gelecek, ... bu karanlık hikayeye ... bir son çekecek.*

‘And I know that one day he will come ... and bring an end to this dark story.’ [9, p. 157].

Mongolian

(23) *Энэ хавар би үр тэвэрнэ. Дулмаа маань эх болж би эцэг болно.*

‘This spring I will hold my baby in my arms. Dulmaa will become a mother and I will become a father.’ [15, p. 60].

(24) *Би маргааши орой шалаа угаана.*

‘I will clean the floor tomorrow evening.’ [16, p. 236].

(25) *Энэ хавар би оройн арван жилийн сургууль төгсөнө.*

‘This spring I will graduate from the evening high school.’ [17, p. 61].

(26) *Улс орноо тогтоосон хойно учигтай үгээрээ тусалж чадна.*

‘After establishing my country, I will be able to help with meaningful words.’ [18, p. 76].

In these Turkish examples – *çıkar, gideriz, çekeceğim, kalacağım, gelecek, çekecek* – and Mongolian examples – *тэвэрнэ, болно, угаана, төгсөнө* – the concrete future meaning emerges together with temporal adverbials such as *yarın sabah* ‘tomorrow morning,’ *iki üç ay* ‘two or three months,’ *bir gün* ‘one day,’ *энэ хавар* ‘this spring,’ and *маргааши орой* ‘tomorrow evening.’

In Mongolian, the concrete future meaning expressed by the general future form *чадна* ‘I can’ likewise emerges with a temporal adverbial, as in *улсаа байгуулсан хойно* ‘after establishing my country,’ which provides the necessary temporal localization.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis of Turkish and Mongolian demonstrates that the aspectual-temporal special meaning of the concrete future arises fundamentally from the combination of the general aspect horizon and the future tense morphemes in both languages. Specifically, the suffixes *-AcAk* and *-Ir* in Turkish, and *-nA* in Mongolian, function as markers of future orientation when used in contexts that exclude habitual or repetitive interpretations, thereby emphasizing the event’s occurrence as a discrete, independent phenomenon in the future.

This study not only deepens our understanding of the grammaticalization of future forms but also illustrates how languages leverage subtle aspectual distinctions to convey concreteness and certainty regarding future events, emphasizing the complex interplay between form, meaning, and context in tense and aspect encoding.

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Conflict of interests

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