

Imperfectivity in Wakhi and Ishkashimi (Handout)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Wakhi and Ishkashimi

East-Iranian (Pamir) languages

Wakhi: spoken in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China; cca 72.000 speakers

Ishkashimi: spoken in Tajikistan and Afghanistan, cca 3.000 speakers

Status: minority, endangered languages

1.2. Language data:

Corpora of Wakhi and Ishkashimi oral and written texts

Fieldwork in Tajikistan, data collected between 2010 and 2022

Wakhi oral data: Obrtelová (2017); Obrtelová (2019a) + unpublished data

Ishkashimi oral data: unpublished

Written data: recent publications in Wakhi and Ishkashimi (Shaidoev 2012; Nazarov 2013; Obrtelová, Sohibnazarbekova & Nematova 2016; Latifov 2019; Nematova & Murodalieva 2020)

1.3. Wakhi and Ishkashimi verb system: classification and methodological issues

1.3.1. **Traditional tense-based model** in earlier grammatical descriptions of Wakhi and Ishkashimi (Lorimer 1958; Pakhalina 1959; Pakhalina 1975; Gryunberg & Steblin-Kamensky 1976; Payne 1989; Lashkarbekov 2018)

Finite verbs forms were described traditionally in temporal terms as: present/present-future/non-past, preterite/past, perfect and pluperfect ‘tenses’. Description of aspectual properties of the verbs was limited to acknowledgement of the ‘particles’ *-aš* in Wakhi and *-as* in Ishkashimi that correspond to the properties of imperfectivity, and of the ‘particle’ *-əp* in Wakhi¹ and *-bi* in Ishkashimi described as ‘perfective future’ (Pakhalina 1975: 81 and Pakhalina 1959: 52). Distinction of mood in Wakhi was described only for the verb ‘be’ with distinct present non-indicative/subjunctive form *umny* vs. indicative present form *təy* (Gryunberg & Steblin-Kamensky 1976: 603), and the negative particle *nə(y)* contrasting with the prohibitive particle *mə(y)*. In Ishkashimi, the description of modal forms was insufficient or inaccurate due to lack of more comprehensive language data.²

The weakness of the above-mentioned traditional linear tense-based model is that it is applied on individual sentences not considering larger discourse context. Elicitation by means of translation of model sentences from other languages is not helpful either. The above-listed studies completely disregarded evidentiality and the complexity of discourse-pragmatic functions of the verb forms that are marked on discourse rather than sentence level, as was implied in the study of Wakhi narratives (Obrtelová 2017).

¹ The enclitic *-əp* is not attested in the Wakhi of Tajikistan; however it is used in the Wakhi of Pakistan.

² The form *vun(i)* was referred to as the present/present-future form of ‘be’ in Pakhalina (1959: 55) and Payne (1989: 440). However, the use of *vun(i)* occurring in the recent and more complex corpus of language data indicates that it is the subjunctive form of ‘be’.

1.3.2. **Deictic model** presented in Obrtelová (2019b) for Wakhi studied the verb forms and interaction between them within larger discourse units. It is the relation to the deictic centre (DC) that determines pragmatic functions of Wakhi verbs. Evidentiality is thus marked on discourse level and it is best illustrated on narratives. There is a fundamental distinction between stories told as witness accounts and those that are non-witnessed (be it fictional, historical, or reported true non-witness stories). Wakhi deictic model is summarized below:

Stem level:

Witness domain (anchored in DC)	Non-witness domain (dissociated from DC)
<p>Past tense (preterite)</p> <p>used exclusively for referring to past events witnessed by the speaker</p>	<p>Non-tense/present (not tense!) (formerly known as ‘present-future’ or ‘non-past’), historically from OI present</p> <p>default tense- and aspect-neutral form, used as indicative non-specific present, non-witnessed past and fiction, future; also subjunctive, imperative</p>
<p>Perfect (aspect-based form)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - resultative-stative meaning, anteriority in relation to another event or to the present situation; - in non-witness narrations used in background (setting, comments, as opposed to action-line); - also inferential/mirative meaning 	
<p>Pluperfect (not attested in Iskhashimi as distinct stem)</p> <p>in Wakhi anteriority in relation to another past event</p>	

1.3.3. *A note on Iskashimi:*

There is much less material available on Iskashimi than on Wakhi. The observations made about Iskashimi in this study are based the ongoing grammatical study and on the language data collected in Tajikistan in the recent years. Based on the preliminary results, it is expected that the model presented for Wakhi verbs could more-or-less apply also to Iskashimi verbs, however, it will need more data and more thorough study.

2. IMPERFECTIVITY

Imperfective marker =əʃ in Wakhi, =əs in Iskashimi³ (further referred to as IPFV) is an enclitic modifying the property of the verb and operating on the clause level. It can be attached freely to any constituent of the clause. In oral speech, it can occur more than once in the clause. Its primary function is to mark imperfectivity (in the broad sense), however, it is the deictic context that determines which type of imperfectivity or other function it marks.

The range of functions of the imperfective markers =əʃ (W) /=əs (I), depending on the context in which they occur, is presented below.

2.1. Past tense + IPFV

Past tense is a witness form, i.e. anchored in DC of the speaker. The combination of IPFV with the past tense conveys:

³ Cf. yaghnobi -išt (<* hišta-) in Steblin-Kamensky (1999: 452)

2.1.1. most frequently, **habitual/iterative witnessed past**

- (1) Wakhi (Nematova & Murodalieva 2020: 21)

Пак рёёр чёуркәш пойдән.

pak rwor čwurk=əʃ poyd=ən
 every day kids and lambs=IPFV **herd.PST=1PL**

‘Every day we used to shepherd the kids and lambs.’

- (2) Ishkashimi (OP02:12)

ba mol=əs ded=əm lalm mol=əs tūyd=on dir
 then livestock=IPFV **hit.PST=1SG** free-grazing livestock=IPFV **go.PST=3PL** far

‘Then I used to let the livestock free-graze; the animals would go far.’

2.1.2. **witnessed past continuous**, less frequent, usually marked lexically by adverbs like *yal* ‘still, yet’

- (3) Wakhi (Obrtelová 2019a: 341)

Уз гал мактабәш чойдәм.

uz yal maktab=əʃ jōyd=əm
 I still school=IPFV **study.PST=1SG**

‘I was still studying at school.’

- (4) Ishkashimi (WP02:11)

adondon= əs pə Nəd blavd=on az pə Rən
 3PL.MED=IPFV in <name> **study.PST=3PL** I in <name>

‘They were studying in Nud, I (was studying) in Ryn.’

In both above-listed patterns the relation to DC remains unaffected. Since the past tense is reserved for witness domain, both the habitual and the continuous past tense also belong to the witness domain.

2.1.3. **counterfactual**

- (5) Wakhi (Shaidoev 2012: 42)

нив чә каби ти чәжмнағдиән йәм диёри силәш юти

niv cə kab-i ti čəʒmnaǰdi-ən yəm diyor-i sil=əʃ yut-i
 now because of your avarice-ABL PROX village-ACC flood=IPFV **take.PST-i**

‘now, because of your avarice the village would have been taken by the flood.’

- (6) Ishkashimi (OF01: 24)

e šo agar da kaltək gūl=əs mak=i ce ded
 VOC king if MED.ADN.OBL stick with=IPFV me=ACC SUB **hit.PST**

az də pu noy=ət čor pu=əs jəst=əm cə ti jō
 I two leg no=and four leg=IPFV **run away.PST=1SG** from your place

‘King, if you had beaten me with that stick, I would have run away from you not with two, but with four legs.’

2.2. Perfect + IPFV

The combination of the perfect with IPFV is less common. When it occurs, it is usually:

2.2.1. **habitual/iterative non-witnessed past** in the resultative-stative and backgrounding meaning, usually in descriptive texts or in the background (setting) parts of narratives, not in the action-line

(7) Wakhi (WEXP_OH: 69)

mis dəwra saari=əv=əʃ wəxt gəzɡ də ʃalək=əv=əʃ ʃətk rəxnig
prior period morning=3PL early **get up.PF** in small fireplace =3PL **make.PF** fire
=IPFV =IPFV

‘In earlier times, they used to get up early, make the fire on the small fire place...’

(8) Ishkashimi (OH01: 2)

wa-iv uk wenük=bo ʃək=əs oʃəq ʃədük=on
DIST.ADN.OBL-3PL.OBL one see.INF=DAT all=IPFV in love **become.PF=3PL**

‘Everyone (usually) fell in love with them at first sight.’

2.2.2. non-witnessed past continuous

(9) Wakhi (Obrtelová 2019a: 349)

Аџи хышруй туэтк ки, цə ʒириəн тəр ир ялт-ялтəш кəрк.

aʒi xuʃruy tuətk ki cə ʒiri-ən tər ir yalt-yalt=əʃ kərək
such beautiful be.PF that from distance-ABL in sun shine-shine=IPFV **make.PF**

‘It was so beautiful that from distance it was shining in the sunshine.’

(10) Ishkashimi (OH01: 3)

uk mülük cə Apkarv uk ʃtoq=əs fay fri dirduk
one man from <name> one girl=IPFV very good **have.PF**

‘A man from Apkarv loved a girl very much.’

2.3. Pluperfect + IPFV

Pluperfect with IPFV is used only in Wakhi and only in **counterfactual conditional** constructions

(11) Wakhi (Nematova & Murodalieva 2020: 32)

Жы бəчəш ага цə нəвиту, ʒузəмəш пдингту.

ʒu bəč=əʃ aga cə nə-vitu wuz=əm=əʃ pdingtu
my uncle=IPFV awake SUB NEG-**become.PPF** I=1SG=IPFV **catch fire.PPF**

‘If my uncle hadn’t woken up, I would have caught fire.’

2.4. Non-tense/present + IPFV

2.4.1. IPFV anchors the non-tense/present (i.e., the form dissociated from DC) in DC and corresponds to **present (continuous) tense** where DC is the actual speech situation (‘here and now’)

- (12) Wakhi
ʒu dʉndʉk=əʃ riʒ-d
 my tooth=IPFV **ache**⁴-3SG
 ‘I have a toothache (right now).’

- (13) Ishkashimi
mə dond=əs dard kən-u
 my tooth=IPFV ache **do**-3SG
 ‘I have a toothache (right now).’

2.4.2. DC can also be shifted, such as in **reported speech** (14d) or **reported perception** (14c), (15) and (16), and can occur in both non-witness (14) or witness narration (15) and (16).

- (14) Wakhi (Nematova & Murodalieva 2020: 69)

- 14a) *Гьлбгим ныъызд тэр кычаэт а дра ныъд.*
Gulbgim nɯwɯz-d tər kɯʃa=ət a dr-a nɯw-d
 <name> come out-3SG to street=and EMP in-DIST cry-3SG
 ‘Gulbegim went out (non-tense) of the house (lit. ‘to the street) and she cried (non-tense) there.’

- 14b) *Иъки яв амра Бика вьзит яв шхэн штик цэрак.*
Iwki yaw amra Bika wizi-t yaw ʃxən ʃtik cərak
 suddenly her friend <name> come-3SG her side game do.INF
 ‘At that moment her friend Bika came (non-tense) to her to play with her.’

- 14c) *Дидиъд ки, Гьлбгимэш ныъд, ханд:*
Didiɣ-d ki Gulbgim=əʃ nɯw-d xan-d
 see-3SG that <name>=IPFV cry-3SG say-3SG
 ‘She saw (non-tense) that Gulbegim was crying (non-tense+IPFV), she said (non-tense):’

- 14d) *Чиз ныъэш?*
čiz nɯw=əʃ
 what cry=IPFV
 ‘“Why are you crying (non-tense+IPFV)?”’

- (15) Wakhi (Nematova & Murodalieva 2020: 22)

- Та ку-нагэм сати ки, ға торикэш вост.*
t-a ku nag=əm sat-i ki ya torik=əʃ wos-t
 in-DIST mountain side=1SG go up-i that very dark=IPFV **become**-3SG
 ‘I went up (witnessed past) towards the mountain (but I saw) that it was becoming (non-tense+IPFV) very dark.’

- (16) Ishkashimi (WP02: 58)

- pə ma Ramat xon sar=on oɣad za torik=əs ʃu*
 in PROX.ADN. <name> house beginning come.PST that dark=IPFV **become**
 OBL =1PL
 ‘We arrived (witnessed past) near Ramat’s house (and saw) that it was getting dark (non-tense+IPFV).’

⁴ Non-tense forms are not given any grammatical label as they represent the default/unmarked verb form.

2.4.3. **‘historical present’** (in witness narrations) – with deictic shift (from the actual DC to DC of the reported/narrated situation)

(17) Wakhi (Obrtelová 2019a: 343)

Чойдеш пувән, жы тат а йәт нақләш царт ки,

čoy=əš puv-ən žh tat a yət naql=əš car-t ki
tea=IPFV **drink-1PL** my father EMP MED story=IPFV **do-3SG** that

жы цәқлай хый даводав вәзди.

žh cəqlay xhy dawodaw wəzd-i
my little sister running come.PST-i

‘We are drinking tea (non-tense+IPFV/present continuous), my father is telling (non-tense+IPFV/present continuous) this story when my little sister came (witnessed past) running in.’

(18) Ishkashimi (OT03: 9)

pari-o=on oyad ani čor gərd=i mak=ət az=əs ani šid-əm
pari-PL=3PL came.PST HSY four around=EZ me=and I=IPFV HSY **cry-1SG**

‘The fairies (pari) came (witnessed past); they surrounded me from all sides and I am like crying (non-tense+IPFV/present continuous).’

2.4.4. **Non-witnessed habitual** (?) (in narration) or reported perception (i.e., deictic shift)?

(19) Wakhi (OPS-CH: 14)

ya aždaor lup wos-t=ət čiz ki tr-a prut wizi-t yaw=əš it
DIST dragon big become- wh that to- front come- he=IPFV **eat.3SG**
3SG =and at DIST 3SG

‘The dragon grew up (non-tense) and would eat (non-tense+IPFV) everything that came (non-tense) in front of him.’

2.4.5. **Non-witness continuous** (?) (in narration) or reported perception (i.e., deictic shift)?

(20) Wakhi (Nematova & Murodalieva 2020: 38)

Крәст-мрәстви пумцвәнәт санән та ку.

krəst-mrəst-v-i pumcv-ən=ət san-ən t-a ku
sheepskin coat-<rhyme>-PL.OBL-ACC put on-3PL=and go up-3PL in-DIST mountain

Йәм зәмәш гал дәйт.

yəm zəm=əš yal dəyt
PROX snow=IPFV still **hit.3SG**

‘They put on (non-tense) their sheepskin coats and went up (non-tense) the mountain. It was still snowing (non-tense+IPFV).’

The non-witness habitual (2.4.4.) and continuous (2.4.5) are somewhat ambiguous because they can equally (and more likely) be interpreted as reported perception (2.4.2.) or historical present (2.4.3.), both of which are forms anchored in DC.

3. CONCLUSION

The primary function of IPFV → **imperfective marker**:

- Witnessed past habitual/iterative/continuous (past tense + IPFV)
- Non-witnessed past habitual/iterative/continuous (perfect + IPFV)

In addition to its imperfective marking function, IPFV also marks **relation to DC**:

- by anchoring the dissociated form in DC: non-tense (by default dissociated) + IPFV → present anchored in DC
 - o Present continuous
 - o Reported speech and reported perception
 - o Historical present
- or by dissociating the anchored form:
 - o past tense + IPFV → counterfactual, unrealized action⁵
 - o pluperfect + IPFV → conditional, counterfactual, unrealized action
(combination with the past tense is less common, most frequently the counterfactual meaning is expressed by pluperfect + IPFV)

Witness domain (anchored in DC)	Non-witness domain (dissociated from DC)
<p>Past tense (preterite) → witnessed past</p> <p>Past tense + IPFV → witnessed past habitual/iterative/continuous</p>	<p>Non-tense/present (not tense!)</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>Past tense + IPFV → counterfactual</p> <p>Present tense ← Non-tense + IPFV (historical present, reported speech and reported perception)</p> </div>	
<p>Perfect (aspect-based form)</p> <p>Perfect + IPFV → non-witnessed past habitual/iterative/continuous</p>	
<p>Pluperfect (only in Wakhi!)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>Pluperfect + IPFV → counterfactual</p> </div>	

⁵ This correlates with the first part of the claim made by Lazard in his article on the category of eventual: *“il existe une certaine affinité «naturelle» d’une part entre les notions d’irréel et d’action passée habituelle, d’autre part entre ces notions et celles de futur”* (Lazard 1975: 358) but it does not apply to Wakhi and Ishkashimi future.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABL	ablative case	MED	medial demonstrative
ACC	accusative case	NEG	negative particle
ADN	adnominal	OBL	oblique
DAT	dative case	PF	perfect
DC	deictic centre	PL	plural
DIST	distal demonstrative	PPF	pluperfect
EMP	emphatic particle	PROX	proximal demonstrative
EZ	ezafe linking particle	PST	past tense
HSY	hearsay particle	SUB	subordinate conjunction
INF	infinitive	VOC	vocative
IPFV	imperfective		

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