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**Imperfectives in Megrelian:
Toward the Understanding of Verbal Aspect as
a Non-Binary Category**

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Megrelian

- Megrelian is an unwritten Kartvelian language compactly spoken in Samegrelo, Northwest Georgia, by some 300k people, almost by none of the above – monolingually.
- It is a language of informal communication between kin and friends.
- Grammar accounts begin in 1880; and continue in 1914, 1991, 2010, 2015, and 2021...
- Major textual materials go back to 1880, 1914, 1920, 1937, 1975, 1991, and 2012.

The Megrelian Verb

Similarly to the rest of Kartvelian, the Megrelian verb is known to express a number of morphologized categories:

- finiteness;
- person (including polypersonal indexing);
- number;
- location and direction;
- voice and a range of valency operations;
- tense;
- aspect;
- mood;
- and evidentiality.

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- voice and a range of valency operations;
- tense;
- **aspect**;
- mood;
- and evidentiality. → rather TAME, not TAM.

Aspect as a Binary Category in Kartvelian

Opposing perfectives and imperfectives is a common place:

- Deeters 1930: 9–10, 14, 24, 93, 112, 115, 138, 141, 144, 146, 157, 159–160, 224;
- Mač’avariani 1974;
- Č’umburize 1986: 8–45;
- Harris 1985: 30, 100, 104, 106, 109, 155–156, 161, 207, 332, 360, 365–366, 420, 428–429, 431;
- Testelets 2021: 509.

Aspect as a Binary Category in Megrelian

This pilot work seeks to underscore that this stance is too simplistic and does not account for the intricacies of the whole architecture of the aspectual system in Megrelian.

It casts the first stone at the comprehensive description of the matter and therefore only focuses on synthetic and analytic expressions related to the expression of the respective values of the verbal aspect in the language, thus, for the time being, putting on the back burner such aspectual patterns as habituality, iterativity, punctuality, etc., with the only exception made for progressivity.

The Morphological Layout

Slot

- 6 affirmative/focus/perfective markers
- 5 (lexical) preverbs (perfective markers)
- 4 progressivizer
- 3 evidential marker
- 2 cross-reference markers
- 1 valency markers
- 0 root

The Morphological Layout

Slot

0 root

+1 augments

+2 auxiliary / causative markers

+3 intransitivizer

+4 series markers

+5 extension marker

+6 mood markers

+7 cross-reference and number markers

+8 conditional marker

Verb Classes

- Class I transitive and ditransitive verbs
(e.g. *eat, give*)
- Class II achievement unaccusatives
(e.g. *remain, rot*)
- Class III activity unergatives (e.g. *play, sing*)
- Class IV inverted statives (e.g. *love, lack*)
- Class II / IV inverted Class II verbs (???)
(e.g. *fall in love, get offended*)

TAME System Architecture

- Series I: PRS IND, FUT PFV IND, PRS IPFV SBJ, FUT PFV SBJ, IMPRF IND, FUT PFV COND, IMPRF COND, FUT PFV COND
+ periphrastic FUT IPFV IND
and FUT IPFV COND
- Series II: AOR IPFV IND, AOR PFV IND, AOR IPFV SBJ, AOR PFV SBJ, IMP IPFV, IMP PFV

TAME System Architecture

- Series III: PERF IPFV IND, PERF PFV IND, PLPF IPFV IND, PLPF PFV IND, PERF IPFV SBJ, PERF PFV SBJ, PLPF IPFV COND, PLPF PFV COND
- Series IV: EVID PRS/IMPRF IND, EVID PFV IND, EVID PLPF IPFV IND, EVID PLPF PFV IND, EVID PLPF IPFV SBJ, EVID PLPF PFV SBJ, EVID PLPF IPFV COND, EVID PLPF PFV COND

Willy-Nilly vs. Dedicated (Im)Perfectives

- Willy-Nilly Perfectives and Imperfectives;
- Occasional Perfectives;
- Dedicated Perfectives;
- Dedicated Imperfectives: Iteration No. 1;
- Dedicated Imperfectives: Iteration No. 2;
- Dedicated Imperfectives: Iterations No. 1 and No. 2 Combined;
- Dedicated Imperfectives: Iteration No. 3.

Willy-Nilly Perfectives and Imperfectives

A verbum simplex is rather imperfective.

A verbum simplex with a slot –5 (lexical) preverb is rather perfective.

č'aruns 'X writes Y'

do-č'aruns 'X **will** write Y' (PFV) (natural PFV)

gino-č'aruns 'X **will** **re**write Y' (PFV) (a new lexeme, PFV)

Note: The aspectual oppositions are only available in the finite verb.

Occasional Perfectives

- Verba simplicia without a (lexical) preverb still having perfective semantics (e.g. *tku* ‘X said Y,’ *uc’u* ‘X told Y to Z’); these need no (lexical) preverbs to get perfectivized, for these are inherently perfective;
- A verbum simplex without a (lexical) preverb, but with a slot –6 prefix *ko-* can also be *rather* perfective:

ziruns ‘X sees/finds Y’

ko-ziruns ‘X **will** see/find Y’ (PFV)

Further constraints can here, however, apply (e.g. focus).

Dedicated Perfectives

The slot –6 prefix *o-* that attaches to a bare stem functions as a dedicated perfective gram:

č'opuns 'X catches Y'

o-č'opuns 'X will catch Y' (PFV, the same lexical item)

cf.

e-č'opuns 'X will pick Y **up**' (PFV, a new lexical item)

Dedicated Perfectives

One of the slot –6 prefixes, *ge-*, that attaches to a preverbed stem functions as a dedicated perfective gram:

gino-č'aruns 'X will rewrite Y' (PFV)

ge-gno-č'aruns 'X will rewrite Y **at one particular moment**'
(PFV+)

k'oči č'ume odiares gino-č'uns. (PFV)

'The man will burn the (whole) grass (in the field) tomorrow (as planned).'

k'oči lamp'očk'as ge-gno-č'uns. (PFV+)

'The man will burn a light bulb (**all of a sudden**).'

Dedicated Imperfectives: Iteration No. 1

Periphrastic Copulaic TAMEs (without a Lexical Preverb [sic!]):

- Future Indicative: PRS SBJ + COP FUT IND

ase bayana davalebas č'arundas i?i.

‘The child will be writing a task now.’

- Future Conditional: IMPRF COND + COP FUT SBJ

goʔa kumumrtumudk'on, bayana davalebas č'arunduk'on i?uapud.

‘Had I come yesterday, the child would have been writing a task.’

Dedicated Imperfectives: Iteration No. 2

The slot –4 prefix, *tima-* (*ti-*, *ma-*, etc.) can crawl between the lexical preverb (slot –5) and the rest of the verb.

q'azaq'i txirs k'orobuns.

‘The peasant collects hazelnuts.’ (IPFV)

q'azaq'i txirs {ge-k'orobuns / eša-k'orobuns}.

‘The peasant, bent down, will {collect / collect selected} hazelnuts (from the ground).’ (PFV)

q'azaq'i txirs {gi-tma-k'orobuns / eš-ma-k'orobuns}.

‘The peasant, bent down, is {collecting / collecting selected} hazelnuts (from the ground).’ (IPFV+)

Dedicated Imperfectives: Iteration No. 2

No Secondary Imperfectivizer (in the Sense of e.g. the Slavic Pattern), but rather a Wackernagel Position Holder:

osuri serit sinates xoo ve-tmi-orzandu.

‘The wife wasn’t lighting up the light(s) even in the night.’

Dedicated Imperfectives: Iterations 1 and 2 Combined

Future **Perfective**:

{*ge-k'orobuns* / *eša-k'orobuns*}

'X, bent down, will {collect / collect selected} Ys'

Future **Imperfective**:

k'orobundas i?i

'X will be collecting Ys'

Dedicated Imperfectives: Iterations 1 and 2 Combined

Future Imperfective Progressive

(with a Lexical Preverb [sic!]):

{gi-*tma*-k'orobundas / eš-*ma*-k'orobundas} *i?i*

'X, bent down, will be {collecting / collecting selected} Ys (from the ground)'

Dedicated Imperfectives: Iteration 3

Series IV:

Evidential Present/Imperfect:

q'azaq'i txirs no-k'orob-u-e.

‘The peasant has evidently been collecting hazelnuts.’

Evidential Perfective:

q'azaq'i txirs {ge-no-k'orobue / eš-no-k'orobue}.

‘The peasant, bent down, has surprisingly been {collecting / collecting selected} hazelnuts (from the ground).’

Dedicated Imperfectives: Iteration 3

Series IV:

Evidential Present/Imperfect Progressive

(with a Lexical Preverb [sic!]):

q'azaq'i txirs {ge-t-no-k'orobue / eš-m-no-k'orobue}.

‘The peasant, bent down, is / has been evidently {collecting / collecting selected} hazelnuts (from the ground).’

Conclusions

Alongside natural perfectives and imperfectives, also known elsewhere in Kartvelian, Megrelian provides evidence of the existence of dedicated perfectives and imperfectives.

Their expression depends on the means that are either recruited in distinct domains of linguistic structure (as is the case with dedicated perfective operators) or serve as one-role operators that can form layers.

Conclusions

The evidence brought forth shows that the aspectual system in Megrelian demonstrates verb forms that can be labeled perfective, as well as those that can be labeled *more* perfective.

Even a more complex structure is found in the domain of imperfectives: there are willy-nilly imperfectives, dedicated imperfectives (futures), and double-dedicated imperfectives (evidential and future progressives), the latter two patterns thus yielding complex expressions, featuring two- and three-layered grammatical structures with imperfective semantics.

Thanks a lot!