

Approaching linguistic diversity from an evolutionary perspective: Towards a typology of future tenses

Elżbieta Adamczyk¹, Martin Becker², Eugen Hill² & Björn Wiemer³

¹ Bergische Universität Wuppertal, ² Universität zu Köln, ³ Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz

eadamczyk@uni-wuppertal.de, martin.becker1@uni-koeln.de, eugen.hill@uni-koeln.de, wiemberb@uni-mainz.de

Raum: ESA1 Ost (O) 122

Workshop description

Unlike present and past tenses, future tenses exhibit a typologically robust tendency towards encoding modality. Accordingly, in the typological literature the future has been described both in temporal and modal terms (e.g. Comrie 1985, Dahl 1985, 2000b, Palmer 2001, among others). This might be ultimately rooted in the fact that the notion of future time is inherently linked to uncertainty given the fact that the current reality may develop in several ways. In a similar vein, future time reference is known to frequently interact with aspect and with aspectual properties of verbs and constructions (cf. Dickey 2000 for different Slavic languages). Accordingly, for instance Copley (2009) describes the encoding of future in terms of a hierarchical interplay between two operators, a modal and an aspectual one.

However, these features inherent to future time reference from a most general point of view do not by themselves explain the considerable variation we observe regarding modality and aspectuality in future grams (henceforth “futures”) of different languages. We assume that this variation can be better understood from a data-oriented semasiological perspective, which implies taking into account the diachronic dimension of futures. This amounts to finding answers to the following questions: Which diachronic factors may be responsible for the observed variation in modal and aspectual values of futures? How to disentangle or isolate such factors in a particular case?

- (a) Which correlations are possible between these factors and the different kinds of modal and aspectual meanings in futures?
- (b) Which patterns of interaction between the different factors are actually attested in natural languages? How to search for and/or establish typologically recurrent patterns of interaction?
- (c) What are the possible trajectories of modality and aspectuality in the development of futures? How to search for and/or establish typologically recurrent trajectories?

At present, three different factors potentially relevant to modality and aspectuality in futures may count as securely established. The first factor is the different sources of future grams. Numerous languages possess futures known to have only recently evolved out of forms or constructions with non-future semantics (cf. Ultan 1978, Bybee & Pagliuca 1987, Bybee & Dahl 1989, Bybee, Pagliuca & Perkins 1991, Dahl 2000a, Heine & Kuteva 2002, Wiemer & Hansen 2012). The most prominent sources, recurrently documented as generating futures in languages of different genetic and areal affiliations, are (a) tense-aspect forms (cf. the perfective future in North Slavic), (b) deontic (incl. volitional) modal expressions (cf. the *shall-* and *will-*futures in English, Balkan languages), (c) constructions with verbs of movement (cf. the komma-future in Swedish and the *aller-*future in French), (d) constructions with inchoative copula verbs (cf. the *werden-*future in German or the imperfective future in North Slavic). Less robustly attested are futures succeeding constructions with verbs such as *say* (in central eastern Bantu, cf. Botne 1998) or *take*

(in Ukrainian, cf. Wiemer 2011), futures evolved out of temporal adverbs (in Lingala, cf. Bybee, Pagliuca & Perkins 1991) or, finally, futures reflecting an agent noun with copula verb (in Sanskrit, cf. Tichy 1992, Lowe 2017).

Differences in the semantics of the source constructions may be relevant in two similar but distinct ways, both of which are commonly subsumed under the notion of “source determination” (cf. Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994, Hilpert 2008, Reinöhl & Himmelmann 2017: 391–399). First, in futures evolved out of a modal source remnants of modal use may always be expected. Accordingly, futures with similar modal sources are likely to exhibit similar inherited modal readings (such as volition in *want*-futures) while futures resulting from a different source construction are less so. Second, futures with a similar source may be expected to develop similarly. For instance, futures evolved out of modals encoding obligation display a tendency towards developing epistemic semantic extensions whereas encoding epistemic modality is not typically associated with *come*- or *go*-futures (cf. Hilpert 2008).

The second factor may be the different mechanisms of future tense development. Here we may distinguish two mechanisms. The first mechanism is the grammaticalisation of an inherited content word, which might be a verb (turned into an auxiliary or semantically weak component of a serial verb construction) or an adverb with temporal semantics (cf. Bybee, Pagliuca & Perkins 1991, Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994, Heine & Kuteva 2002). The second possible mechanism of future evolution is the more direct functional shift, i.e. “hypoanalysis” from a non-future to a future (cf. Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994, Haspelmath 1998, Reinöhl & Himmelmann 2016).

It is known that futures which emerged by hypoanalysis often allow for gnomic and habitual readings, although in purely semantic terms these two meanings are difficult to link to future time reference (cf. Haspelmath 1998). A functional shift from a present tense or a subjunctive mood to a future is usually triggered by the development of a new present tense or a new subjunctive mood, which restricts the domain of the inherited formations to formerly marginal uses such as prediction, generalised truths, and habitual actions. By contrast, gnomic or habitual readings are not attested for many subtypes of grammaticalisation futures, such as *come*-, *go*- or *take*-futures, although their sources are equally capable of expressing generalised truths or repeated actions.

Finally, the third factor potentially responsible for modal and aspectual readings in futures is the different behaviour of future tenses in the relevant language systems. It is known that the same language system may accommodate several functionally distinct futures, which may have emerged at different times and due to different mechanisms. In such a situation, it is natural to expect complex patterns of interaction between different future tenses which, in theory, might be responsible for different modal and aspectual flavours in futures (cf. Hedin 2000, Markopoulos 2009, Markopoulos et al. 2017 on Greek).

The workshop invites papers aimed at

- (a) identifying new factors potentially relevant to the emergence and subsequent development of modal and aspectual properties in futures,
- (b) describing patterns of interaction between these factors,
- (c) identifying recurrent patterns of interaction and establishing correlations with different kinds of modality and aspectuality in order to account for the typological variation.