

“Opaque” tense and aspect forms in the light of intra-genetic and areal typology

As a rule, core tense and aspect forms of the Lezgian languages¹ are rather “transparent” with respect to their inner structure. Most finite forms are analytic (synchronically or at least diachronically), and are made of a non-finite form – most often a participle, a converb, or an infinitive – and a copula, which can normally appear in the present or in the past form. An important subdivision which is evident in most of the languages of the group is between the forms based on the Perfective vs. the Imperfective verbal stem: roughly speaking, forms of the Perfective “subdomain” describe situations with past time reference, and forms of the Imperfective “subdomain” describe situations with present time reference or durative/habitual situations in the past (cf. the Present or the Imperfect). Not infrequently, forms with future time reference are also found in the Imperfective “subdomain” (e.g. among polysemous Habituals/Futures), or else they may stand apart from the aspectual opposition, being derived from some modal constructions (like deontic futures based on the Purposive/Infinitive).

Agul can be seen as an example of a language with a fairly “transparent” tense and aspect system. It is rather obvious – at least when one compares similar forms across different Agul dialects² – that the main past form, namely the Perfect, historically consists of a Perfective Converb and a Present Copula ‘is’ (e.g. pu-ne / pu-na-w ‘said’ < pu-na ‘having said’ + e / wu ‘is’), or that the Resultative is the combination of a Perfective Converb and a Present Locative Copula ‘is inside’ (e.g. pu-na-ja / pu-na-ʔa ‘said’ < pu-na ‘having said’ + aja / ʔa ‘is inside’). The forms within the Present/Future subsystem are also rather transparent structurally, even if they are morphologically very tight and should be synchronically regarded as synthetic rather than analytic:

Forms (verb ‘to read’)	Structures	Meanings
ruXaj -a, ruXaj aja ruXaj -i, ruXaj aji	IMPERFECTIVE CONVERB + Present vs. Past Locative Copula	Present (durative/habitual) Imperfect (durative/habitual)
ruXaj -e (= ruXaj + e) ruXaj -i (= ruXaj + ij)	IMPERFECTIVE CONVERB + Present vs. Past Copula	Habitual Present Habitual Past
ruXaf -e (= ruXaf + e) ruXaf -ij (= ruXaf + ij)	IMPERFECTIVE PARTICIPLE + Present vs. Past Copula	Generic Present Generic Past
ruXas -e (= ruXas + e) ruXas -ij (= ruXas + ij)	INFINITIVE + Present vs. Past Copula	Future (general meaning) Counterfactual

The tense and aspect system of Udi³ is, on the contrary, fairly opaque. It is obvious that the main past form is directly related to the Perfective Converb/Participle (cf. har-i=ne ‘s/he came’ and har-i ‘having come’), but as for the Present/Future group of forms, it is very difficult to analyse them as being made up of some synchronically extant non-finite form and a copula:⁴

Forms (verb ‘to become’)	Structures	Meanings
ba=ne=k -sa ba=ne=k -sa -j	< the INFINITIVE in -es + -a (?)	Present (durative/habitual) Imperfect (durative/habitual)
bak -al=e bak -al=e=j	~ cf. PARTICIPLE in -ala (?)	Future (general meaning) Counterfactual / Future in the Past
ba=ne=k -o ba=ne=k -o -j	~ cf. a NOMINALIZER -o (?)	Future Modal / Generic Present Future Modal in the Past
bak -a=n(e) bak -a=ne=j	< ???	Present Subjunctive Past Subjunctive

The only thing that is evidently similar to Agul is the opposition between the present and past tenses of a copula (in Udi, the Present Copula is zero, and the Past one has been reduced to the enclitic -j). Thus, all core tense and aspect forms in both languages have more or less “symmetric” temporal equivalents both in the Present and in the Past – cf. the Present vs. the Imperfect, the Future vs. the Counterfactual, etc. As for the make-up of the individual forms of Udi, there are no absolutely clear cases. As regards the Udi Present, it is clear that it is formally derived from the Infinitive: cf. bak-es ‘to become’ ~ bak-(e)s-a with vowel elision; however, what is this -a? And how come it is the Present form that is derived from such a “prospective-oriented” form as the Infinitive? (Cf. Agul, where it is the Future that has developed on the basis of the Infinitive, which is semantically quite expected.)

Even the existence of an aspectual opposition in Udi is not obvious – only a few verbs have more than one stem, and these stems are usually not described in the literature as aspectual. However, it is clear that one group of forms is based on a common stem which semantically is the Imperfective: cf. a “simultaneity” participle eR-ala ‘coming, approaching’ which has the stem eR-, as opposed to the Perfective stem har- (see above), and the same stem eR- appears in the finite forms eR-al=e ‘will come’, e=ne=R-o ‘will (possibly) come’ or eR-a=n ‘...that s/he comes’. The fact that these three forms, which are not strictly speaking Imperfective on a synchronic level (two forms are futures and one is subjunctive used in dependent clauses), historically originate from the Imperfective stem is very important for the understanding of their evolution. One of the most widespread grammaticalization paths in Lezgian languages – as well as in many other languages of the Caucasus and Transcaucasia – is the development of present habituais into futures (via intermediate modal meanings; cf. Haspelmath 1998, Tatevosov 2005), and it seems that the same development has occurred in Udi, and not just once.

Some structural parallels between the Udi core verbal forms and forms with similar meanings in other Lezgian languages, as well as in the Indo-European and Turkic languages of the area permit us to understand the possible grammaticalization paths that have shaped the Udi tense and aspect system. It will be argued that two Udi Futures have originated from habituais/generics, in a fashion that is prevalent in other Lezgian languages. On the other hand, the development of the Udi Subjunctive seem to be unique within the Lezgian group, as Udi has most likely developed a finite complementation strategy under the influence of neighbouring Iranian (or Armenian) languages. The origin of the Udi Present, as proposed in the paper, may also be an instance of areal interaction, as it most probably reflects a specific locative model “Dative/Locative case of the Infinitive + Copula” which is found, for example, in Oghuz Turkic languages of Transcaucasia.

Notes

1. A group within the Nakh-Daghestanian (East Caucasian) family including Lezgian, Tabassaran, Agul, Tsakhur, Rutul, Kryz, Budugh, Archi and Udi.
2. The main distinction lies between the Qushan dialect and the “Agul proper” dialect group, which are not mutually intelligible; the “Agul proper” group comprises Tpig, Burkikhan, Keren, Huppuq’, Tsirkhe and Fite dialects.
3. It is a very distant relative of Agul within the group; the two languages are separated by the Caucasian range and have probably never been in contact since the break-up of Proto-Lezgian (more than 3500 years ago). In this paper the data from the Nizh dialect of Udi are taken into account.
4. The personal marker (here =e // =ne ‘3Sg’) is given below in italics; it can be both a suffix and an infix, and it can even occur on a focused constituent outside of the verb (cf. Harris 2002 for details).

References

1. Harris, Alice C. *Endoclitics and the Origins of Udi Morphosyntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
2. Haspelmath, Martin. The semantic development of old presents: New futures and subjunctives without grammaticalization // *Diachronica* 15-1, 1998.
3. Tatevosov, Sergei. From habituals to futures: discerning the path of diachronic development // Verkuyl, Henk; De Swart, Henriette; Van Hout, Angeliek (eds.) *Perspectives on Aspect*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2005.