

Diachronic Perspectives on Aspect

May 28, 2009

Ling 315: Aspect

M. Butt and M. Romero

1 Bybee et al. 1994 (Ch. 5)

- Bybee et al. do a typological survey and develop a theory of likely/frequent historical changes based on this (a common methodology among typologists).
- Theoretically they base themselves primarily on Comrie (1976).
- We will examine their findings and predictions and compare them to an actual South Asian historical scenario (they do not survey Indo-Aryan languages).

1.1 Definitions

Imperfective Contrast to perfective. Views situation from within, with explicit reference to its internal structure. 1) Progress at a particular reference point (past or present); 2) Characteristic of a period of time that includes the reference time — habitual situation.

Progressive Action ongoing at R (reference time). Typically applies to dynamic but not stative ones. (English ex. typical).

Continuous More general than progressive. Can also be used with statives — they didn't actually find a "gram" for this.

Habitual Situations customarily repeated on different occasions. Could also have explicit past vs. present habitual grams.

Iterative Event that is repeated. Particularly relevant to telic predicates.

Frequentative Includes habituals, but additionally specifies that the action is frequent.

Continuative Includes progressives, additionally specifies that agent of action is deliberately keeping the action going. (*keep on doing*).

Question: How do these compare to the categories already learned? (e.g., Smith's pictures)

1.2 Comrie's Classification (p. 138)

1.3 Sources

Sources of Progressives pp. 128–129. Significant: many locations and *postural verbs* (sit, stand, lie).

English progressive source (Jespersen): *He is on hunting, He was a-coming home.*

1.4 Historical Predictions

1.4.1 Progressive and Imperfective

p. 139 progressive > continuous > imperfective — but no gram for continuous

1.4.2 Habituals

- p. 151 Habitual — asymmetry between past and present.
- general habitual > past habitual
only way for present habitual is from general present where only habitual present remains
- Not many overt habitual grams.
- Habitual meaning generally included in other grams (like imperfective or present), or expressed by lexical items like *live, know, be accustomed to.*

2 Indo-Aryan: Urdu/Hindi

Urdu/Hindi is an Indo-Aryan language spoken in South Asia (Pakistan and India). It is descended from the Old Indo-Aryan Sanskrit (whose older stage is Vedic).

Deo, p. 163 — forms in Vedic

Deo p. 101 — time line

- In Sanskrit, Aorist, Imperfect and Perfect may be used interchangeably for past time reference, a new participial form (*-ta*) becomes available for referring to past, culminated events.
- In Middle-Aryan, more and more of the inflectional morphology is eroded, leading to a heavy use of periphrastic forms.
- In Early New-Indo Aryan — marked use of the auxiliary ‘be’ — evident in almost every clause.
- Sketch of the system of a modern New Indo-Aryan language (Urdu/Hindi) follows below.

In the next session, we will try to understand the historical changes in more detail (Deo Chapters 4&5).

3 Reichenbachian Notions

Semantics: Ehrlich’s (1992) DRT version of the basic Reichenbachian concepts E,R and S.

Contextually Determined Relations: S (Speech Time) and R (Reference Time)

Intrinsic Relations: E (Event Time) and R

Roughly:

		Contextually Determined	
		S,R	R < S
Intrinsic	E,R	Present	Past
Relations	E < R	Perfect	Past Perfect
	E > R	—	—

The notation “S,R” signifies that these stand in a relation to one another. This relation could be either temporal overlap or temporal precedence (determined by the context).

4 Tense

4.1 Present

Urdu only has a present tense for one verb: *ho* ‘be’.

(2)

Present of Urdu <i>be</i>				
	Singular	Plural	Respect (ap)	Familiar (tum)
1st	hũ	hẽ		
2nd	hε		hẽ	ho
3rd	hε	hẽ		

ho- ‘be’

Present Tense: $E \circ R$ & $R \circ S$

4.1.1 Subjunctive/Questions

The same morphology on other verbs signals either a subjunctive or a question.

(3)

Urdu Subjunctive Paradigm (Question)				
	Singular	Plural	Respect (ap)	Familiar (tum)
1st	mar-ũ	mar-ẽ		
2nd	mar-e		mar-ẽ	mar-o
3rd	mar-e	mar-ẽ		

mar- ‘hit’

Subjunctive:

- (4) agar mē aũ, to acc^ha ho-g-a
if I.Nom come so good be-Fut-M.Sg
'If I were to come, that would be good.'

Question:

- (5) mē ab^hi aũ?
I.Nom now come
'Should I come (over) now?'

4.1.2 Imperative

The same morphology is used for imperatives with the second persons and the first plural.

- (6) k^hana k^hao
food.Nom eat
'Eat (your) food.'
- (7) aye k^hana k^haē
come food.Nom eat
'Come, let's eat.' (Schmidt 1999:98)

There is also some special morphology for extra-polite imperatives.

This morphology is confined to the handful of stems ending in vowels (and ɾ).

	le 'take'	de 'give'	kar 'do'	pi 'drink'	si 'sew'
ap (2.respect)	lijiye	dijiye	kijiye	pijiye	sijiye
		'please do do X'			

4.1.3 Historical Development

Present Morphology

- The present morphology is a remnant of the old Sanskrit/Prakrit present and imperative morphology (the two collapsed in Middle Indo-Aryan).
- It is the only piece of tense morphology that has survived into the modern ages.

Special Imperative

- The special imperative is generally taken to derived from an Old Indo-Aryan (OIA) optative in *-yā*, which became *-eyya* in early Middle Indo-Aryan (MIA) and then is supposed to have "hardened" in later MIA to *-ejja-*, *-ijja-* (Kellog 1893:229–230, Beames 1872:108, Chatterji 1926:900).

- Alternative Analysis (Butt and Lahiri):

The source of the modern *-j-* is an allomorphic variant of the original Sanskrit verb *gā* ‘go’ (cf. modern Urdu *ja-/ga-* ‘go’). The person endings of the indicative are simply remnants of the original inflections this verb carried. The *-j-* caused vowel raising on the stem vowel.

4.1.4 Summarizing Questions

- Is it crosslinguistically odd not to have a “real” present tense? Or is it normal?
- There is a clear historical affinity between present, subjunctive (modality) and future. Can formal semantic analyses reflect this affinity and even predict the historical changes?

N.B. The notion of *semantic maps* (e.g., Plungian) is an attempt in this direction, but not an ultimately satisfactory one as yet.

4.2 Future

The future is the only tense in Urdu which is formed morphologically and which applies regularly across the verbal inventory.

(8)

Urdu Future Paradigm				
	Singular	Plural	Respect (ap)	Familiar (tum)
	M/F	M/F	M/F	M/F
1st	mar-ũ-g-a/i	mar-ẽ-g-e/i		
2nd	mar-e-g-a/i		mar-ẽ-g-e/i	mar-o-g-e/i
3rd	mar-e-g-a/i	mar-ẽ-g-e/i		
mar-	‘hit’			

- The first piece of morphology after the stem is identical to the present/subjunctive morphology.
- The *-g-* is derived from a Sanskrit participle of the verb *gā* ‘go’ (Kellog 1893:231, Beg 1988:191, McGregor 1972).
- The gender and number agreement morphology (*a/i/e*) is regular synchronically in that it is also found on the perfect (section 4.3.2), imperfect (section 5.2) and and progressive (section 6.1) forms, all descended from participles.

The morphology is unproblematic if the *-g-* is indeed associated with an old participle.

Evidence for On-Going Historical Change

- The *-g-* was separable until relatively recently, providing evidence for a change which pressed a version of ‘go’ into service as a tense auxiliary.

- This auxiliary is turning into a tense affix via the status of a clitic.
- The *-g-* is still somewhat separable (and is written as a separate word in the Urdu orthography, but not the Hindi one).

(9) vo [lik^h-e or qar^h-e]-gi
 Pron.3 write-3.Sg and read-3.Sg-Fut.Fem.Sg
 ‘She will read and write.’

Semantics, Absolute Future: $E \circ R$ & $R > S$

4.2.1 With Perfect Morphology

Perfect/past morphology (section 4.3.2) can also serve to express the future.

(10) mē ab^hi ayi
 I.Nom now came.F.Sg
 ‘I’ll be right there (come right away).’

This is perhaps analogous to the German situation, where the present morphology is systematically ambiguous between present and future readings.

Immediate Future: $E \circ R$ & $R \geq S$

4.2.2 Imminent Future

There is yet another way to express imminently impending actions.

- *-vala* ‘one’ (as in ‘the egg-eating-one’) in combination with a verbal noun.
- The dative/accusative *ko* in combination with a verbal noun.

(11) kɪfti ɖub-ne vali hɛ
 boat.F.Sg.Nom drown-Inf.Obl one.F.Sg be.Pres.3.Sg
 ‘The boat is about to sink.’ (Schmidt 1999:139)

(12) a. is lar̩ki ki ʃadi ho-ne **vali** hɛ
 this girl.F.Sg Gen.F.Sg marriage.Nom be-Inf.Obl one.F.Sg be.Pres.3.Sg
 ‘This girl’s wedding is taking place soon.’ (Schmidt 1999:140)

a. is lar̩ki ki ʃadi ho-ne **ko** hɛ
 this girl.F.Sg Gen.F.Sg marriage.Nom be-Inf.Obl Acc be.Pres.3.Sg
 ‘This girl’s wedding is taking place soon.’ (Schmidt 1999:140)

Imminent Future: $E \circ R$ & $R > S$ & the event will take place with great certainty (i.e., minus the modal readings the future usually carries with it).

4.2.3 Summary and Questions

- The future is the only regular “finite” form for all verbs.
- Is this natural or exceptional? Cf. English and German which don’t have morphological futures at all, but rely on futures culled from modals.
- A general theory of when verbal nouns plus case marking can be used in “tensed” contexts is desirable. Is there any connection to the cases used for tense in Australian languages (e.g., Evans)?

4.3 Past

There is no specialized past tense morphology. A form of the “perfect” morphology is used to express past tense.

The verb ‘be’ forms a suppletive paradigm with t^h - (from ‘stand’) in that this form expresses the past tense of ‘be’.

(13)

Past of Urdu <i>be</i>				
	Singular	Plural	Respect (ap)	Familiar (tum)
	M/F	M/F	M/F	M/F
1st	t^h -a/i	t^h -e/ĩ		
2nd	t^h -a/i		t^h -e/ĩ	t^h -e/ĩ
3rd	t^h -a/i	t^h -e/ĩ		

t^h - ‘be’

The verb is marked for gender and number because it is derived from an old participial form.

4.3.1 Imminent Action Again

Just as with the present tense, the past tense ‘be’ also allows a combination with verbal nouns to express an imminent action in the immediate past.

- (14) a. jab \dot{d} aktar sahib bol-ne=ko t^h e
when doctor sahib.M.Nom speak-Inf.Obl=Acc be.Past.M.Pl
to sab log cup ho gε-ye
though all people.Nom quiet become go.Perf.M.Pl
‘When the doctor was about to speak, everybody fell quiet.’ (Glassman 1986:233)
- b. mem-sahiba cai bana-ne=ko $t^hĩ$
Madam.F.Nom tea.F.Nom make-Inf.Obl=Acc be.Past.F.Pl
‘Madam was just about to make tea.’ (Glassman 1986:233)

4.3.2 With Perfect Morphology

The “perfect” is formed with the verb stem and the general gender/number morphemes *a/i/e*.

There used to be a *-i-* or *-y-* which explicitly marked this tense/aspect, but it disappeared over the last few hundred years.

(15)

Urdu Perfect/Past Paradigm				
	Singular	Plural	Respect (ap)	Familiar (tum)
	M/F	M/F	M/F	M/F
1st	mar-a/i	mar-e/i		
2nd	mar-a/i		mar-e/i	mar-e/i
3rd	mar-a/i	mar-e/i		
mar-	‘hit’			

In isolation, this marking results in a past tense reading.

(16)

anjum	aj	sūbah	skul	cal-i
Anjum.F.Sg.Nom	today	morning	school.F.Sg.Loc	walk-Perf.F.Sg
‘Anjum walked/went to school this morning.’				

Past: $E \circ R$ & $R < S$

Historical Origin:

This morphological marking has been termed “perfective” or “perfect”, presumably because the (now null) morpheme is descended from an OIA past participial form in *-tā* (e.g., *the eaten apple*).

(17)

evam- uk-tā	tu	haṃsena	damayantī
so-say-Part.Nom.Sg	then	goose.Inst.Sg	Damayanti.Nom.Sg.F
1. ‘Then Damayanti was spoken to like that by the goose.’			
2. ‘Then the goose spoke to Damayanti thus.’			
			Sanskrit, Nalopākhyāna I,30

5 Aspect

5.1 Perfect

In combination with the ‘be’ auxiliary, the perfect/past morphology yields standard present and past perfect readings.

(18)

anjum=ne	adnan=ko	dek ^h -a	he
Anjum.F.Sg=Erg	Adnan.M.Sg=Acc	see-Perf.M.Sg	be.Pres.3.Sg
‘Anjum has seen Adnan.’			

(19)

anjum=ne	adnan=ko	dek ^h -a	t ^h -a
Anjum.F.Sg=Erg	Adnan.M.Sg=Acc	see-Perf.M.Sg	be.Past.M.Sg
‘Anjum had seen Adnan.’			

Present Perfect: $E < R$ & $R \circ S$

Past Perfect: $E < R$ & $R < S$

5.2 Imperfect

The “imperfect” is formed with the verb stem, a *-t-* morpheme and the general gender/number morphemes.

(20)

Urdu Imperfect Paradigm				
	Singular	Plural	Respect (ap)	Familiar (tum)
	M/F	M/F	M/F	M/F
1st	mar-t-a/i	mar-t-e/i		
2nd	mar-t-a/i		mar-t-e/i	mar-t-e/i
3rd	mar-t-a/i	mar-t-e/i		
mar-	‘hit’			

In combination with the ‘be’ auxiliaries it yields a habitual present/past reading.

(21)

anjum	adnan=ko	mar-t-i	hε
Anjum.F.Sg.Nom	Adnan.M.Sg=Acc	hit-Perf.f.Sg	be.Pres.3.Sg
‘Anjum hits Adnan.’			

(22)

anjum	adnan=ko	mar-t-i	t ^h -i
Anjum.F.Sg.Nom	Adnan.M.Sg=Acc	hit-Perf.F.Sg	be.Past.F.Sg
‘Anjum used to hit Adnan.’			

Without the auxiliaries, this marking expresses unfulfilled wishes (Schmidt 1999:118).

(23)

mē	tala	lga-t-i	...
I.Nom	lock	put-on-Impf-F.Sg	
‘Had I put on a lock, ...’			

It is also used in a continued narrative (Schmidt 1999:118).

Historical Origin:

The modern *-t-* comes from an original Sanskrit present participle in *-ant*, which entered the system as an aspectual marker in MIA. This is the same participle that is still found in German in *die rennende Frau* ‘the running woman’ (this form also used to exist in English, but has been replaced by *ing*)

6 Continuation

While Urdu has no prototypical present or past, it makes intense use of various ways of expressing a continuing action (beyond the habitual and narrative detailed above).

6.1 Progressive

A general progressive meaning is achieved by combining the verb stem with a progressive auxiliary *rah* ‘stay’ (in the present or past). The progressive auxiliary is morphologically perfect.

- (24) a. anjum adnan=ko mar rah-i he
Anjum.F.Sg.Nom Adnan.M.Sg=Acc hit stay-Perf.f.Sg be.Pres.3.Sg
‘Anjum is hitting Adnan.’
- b. anjum adnan=ko mar rah-i t^h-i
Anjum.F.Sg.Nom Adnan.M.Sg=Acc hit stay-Perf.F.Sg be.Past.F.Sg
‘Anjum was hitting Adnan.’

Present Progressive: E ○ R & R ○ S & the event is a continuing one.

6.2 Iteration and Longer Continuation with the Progressive

The progressive with an imperfect main verb signals iteration.

- (25) a. kutta b^hōk-t-a rah-a
dog.M.Sg.Nom bark-Impf-M.Sg stay-Perf.M.Sg
‘The dog kept on barking.’
E ○ R & R ○ S & the event iterates over a give time span.
- b. kutta b^hōk-t-a rah-t-a
dog.M.Sg.Nom bark-Impf-M.Sg stay-Impf-M.Sg
‘The dog keeps on barking.’

E ○ R & R ○ S & the event is a continuing one over a long time span that has not ended.

6.3 Iteration and Longer Continuation with ‘go’

- (26) kutta b^hōk-t-a ja-t-a he
dog.M.Sg.Nom bark-Impf-M.Sg go-Impf.M.Sg be.Pres.3.Sg
‘The dog keeps on barking (willfully, over a long time).’

Features: long time span that has not ended yet, willfulness of actor, iteration, event itself is of a longer duration

One can add yet another auxiliary: *cal* ‘walk’ (data courtesy of the MT group in Lahore).

- (27) *kūtta* *b^hōk-t-a* *cal-a* *ja-t-a* *hε*
dog.M.Sg.Nom bark-Impf-M.Sg walk-Perf.M.Sg go-Impf.M.Sg be.Pres.3.Sg
‘The dog keeps on barking (willfully, over a long time).’

And yet another iteration.

- (28) *kūtta* *b^hōk-t-a* *cal-a* *ja rāh-a* *hε*
dog.M.Sg.Nom bark-Impf-M.Sg walk-Perf.M.Sg go stay-Perf.M.Sg be.Pres.3.Sg
‘The dog keeps on barking (willfully, over a long time, continuously).’

These indicate a yet greater degree of iteration and continuation: longer duration of the iterated events.

7 Outlook

Much has changed since OIA. In the next session, we will examine part of the changes in more detail and then compare the actual changes with what Bybee et al. posit.

8 Homework

Given what you know about the Urdu/Hindi aspectual system so far (synchrony and diachrony), does it fit into with what Bybee et al. found? Please provide a detailed answer with reference to their text/findings and the Urdu/Hindi examples in this handout (you may also do further research, of course).