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As far as is known, all languages have ways of expressing modality, i.e., notions of possibility, necessity, contingency, etc. But this pervasive phenomenon has so far been the object of little systematic linguistic analysis. In fact, investigators do not even agree on the scope of the term modality. Very roughly speaking, two kinds of modality have been distinguished, namely epistemic and deontic. The former involves the speaker's judgment as to the degree of certainty of an event or state of affairs being referred to. Deontic modality, on the other hand, has to do with such notions as obligation, permissibility and necessity. However, as useful as this distinction is, little is known so far concerning the linguistic patterns which express these ideas. It is clear that the modality systems of a great many languages will need to be thoroughly scrutinized and compared before any conclusions can be drawn as to their place in 'universal grammar.'

The papers included in this volume of the Kansas Working Papers in Linguistics were written by graduate students at the University of Kansas for a seminar on modality taught by Professor Choon-Kyu Oh in the spring of 1979. They deal with a variety of topics bearing on modality and with a variety of languages and language families. It is our hope that these papers will stimulate comments from colleagues at other institutions.

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A CROSS-LINGUISTIC LOOK AT FUTURE MARKERS

Patricia J. Hamel

Abstract: In an effort to contribute to a determination as to whether English will is a future tense marker or a contingency marker, the use of future markers as traditionally analyzed in Spanish, Alaskan, Turkish, Hebrew, Malay and Korean are investigated. Means of indicating future time, ranges of meaning of future-marked sentences, and the use of future in contingency clauses are compared. It is concluded that when alternatives exist, speakers prefer to reserve the future marker for situations in which they are less than certain regarding the occurrence of an event.

The question has been raised in the literature as to the nature of English will: whether it is in fact a future tense, marking future time only, or whether it is a contingency marker, expressing a predicted result given certain conditions. In view of the recent research on language universals, and the possibility that data from other languages may be able to shed some light on the discussion, it is useful to investigate the so-called future marker in several languages, both related and unrelated to English. Because of the existence of several types of future-like constructions in English, and the apparent relationship among them, the following hypothesis was the basis for the cross-linguistic study:

If a language has more than one verbal construction used to refer to future time, the construction which is traditionally considered to be the future will be more of an atemporal presumptive marker than a temporal (future) assertion.

To test the hypothesis, data on the future constructions and their usage were gathered in personal elicitation from native speakers of English, Spanish, Alaskan, Hebrew, Turkish, Malay and Korean. Since each of the consultants spoke English as well as his/her own language, data were elicited by asking questions regarding the types of future marker employed (whether verbal suffix, periphrastic construction or other means), alternate constructions which may indicate future time, the range of meanings of the future-marked sentences, and the co-occurrence of the future marker with conditional clauses and past-time markers.

Types of Future Markers

Of the seven languages surveyed, three have verbal suffixes (Turkish, Spanish and Korean), one (Hebrew) prefixes the future marker on the verb, and three have periphrastic auxiliary-type constructions (Alaskan, Malay and English).

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb Stem</th>
<th>Future Marker</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>gel-</td>
<td>ahmet gelajek 'Ahmet will come'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>ir</td>
<td>el irá 'He will go'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>ka-</td>
<td>na ka kalkēsita 'I will go'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>g-š-r</td>
<td>ani aggur 'I will finish'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>drie</td>
<td>ex vuxt drigh 'He will drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>pergi</td>
<td>saya akan pergi 'I will go'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>I will go</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Constructions Which May Indicate Future Time

In all the languages surveyed except Hebrew, the present tense (aorist in Turkish) can be used to refer to future time. In English, Spanish and Turkish, the progressive may also be used. Arabic has no verbal construction denoting progressive. In English and Spanish the 'going to' construction is very commonly used for future time. Following are examples from Turkish, Spanish, Korean, Malay and Arabic which illustrate such future reference. (Note that the glosses exemplify similar usage in English.)

Turkish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aorist</th>
<th>Yarın ahmet gelir</th>
<th>'Ahmet comes tomorrow'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prog.</td>
<td>Yarın ahmet geliyor</td>
<td>'Ahmet is coming tomorrow'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Yarın ahmet gelajek</td>
<td>'Ahmet will come tomorrow'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Turkish, the use of the aorist or progressive to indicate future time is strongly dependent on context or on the presence of a time adverb to specify futurity. The use of the aorist implies that the speaker has less evidence for his assertion than is required for use of the future suffix -gelajek, while the progressive implies more evidence, practically certainty. This situation differs from English in that the speaker in Turkish makes a weaker assertion using the aorist than he makes when using the future. In English, use of the present constitutes a stronger assertion than use of the future. In both languages, however, use of the progressive is more of an assertion than use of the future.

Malay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Saya pergi beso?</th>
<th>'I go tomorrow'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Saya akan pergi fut</td>
<td>'I will go'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference among these examples is again based on speaker's knowledge and degree of certainty, but here the time adverb adds to the strength of the assertion. In the akan sentences, the speaker is making an assertion when he uses the time adverb beso?; without it, he is only predicting.
The Spanish speaker makes a distinction among these four alternatives again based on how certain he is regarding the prediction being made. If the event is scheduled, tickets bought, bags packed, the present or present progressive would be used. The 'going to' future, like the English equivalent, also requires strong evidence on the part of the speaker, such as having been told so by the actor. The future, on the other hand, requires only some knowledge of the actor's previous behavior patterns or other such indirect evidence.

Korean

Note that the example given as the future tense may also be understood to mean 'I presume that John will leave the hospital tomorrow'. Thus the future marker in Korean may indicate conjecture rather than certainty; to express the latter, the speaker will choose the present tense form of the verb.

Range of Meaning of Future-Marked Sentences

In five of the seven languages surveyed (English, Spanish, Turkish, Korean and Alsatian), the informants were quite clear in expressing the usage of the future marker as indicating possibility or probability. The words
used to describe the differences among the future and the various other possible future-time constructions were most commonly 'not as certain about it', only stating a possibility', or 'probably but not definitely'. In Hebrew, however, the response was quite different. For the Hebrew speaker, there is no other possible way to refer to future time save the above-mentioned prefix, and the absence of a tense marker indicates aorist or generic/habitual action. The future construction in Malay (akan + verb) also appears to imply more certainty than the future in the five other languages (Turkish, Alsatian, Spanish, English and Korean). In Hebrew and Malay, other modal constructions are used to express possibility and probability.

English  He’ll be at home now. It’s after 5:00. You’ll have heard about Jack already. I’m sure.

Turkish  Ahmet gelecekdi  ‘Ahmet would have come’
        come-fut-past  
        Ahmet sindi evde olajak  ‘Ahmet is probably at home now’
        now house-loc be-fut  

Alsatian  ox vuxt ontlavife nkoxa  ‘He’ll probably come by 12:00’
        he fut 12:00 come
        di vuris ralst han  ‘You are probably right’
        you fut right have
        di vuris mtt suon gwa  ‘You were probably tired’
        tired be bspart.

Korean  John-i cikin  ‘John has arrived yesterday’
        c’uk-al ilk-ko iss-il kwa-e-1-ta
        subj nou book-On read-prog. ba-fut-decl.marker
        John will be/is probably reading the book now!
        John-i cee voo’al ha-das-il kwa-e-1-ta
        yesterday arrive past future
        John will have arrived yesterday

Spanish  ‘John is probably 30 years old’
        Juan bendrá treinta años
        have-fut 20 years
        Juan saldrá enojado  ‘John will probably leave angry
        leave-fut angry
        Juan habrá llegado ayer  ‘John probably arrived yesterday
        have-fut arrive-part. yesterday

Juaral Contingency Clauses and the Future Marker

Since the nature of clauses dealing with conditions is inherently contingent, and the future marker was hypothesized as more contingent than
other possible future forms, it would seem to follow that the future marker would be redundant, and would not normally appear in such clauses. In five of the seven languages (Alsatian, English, Spanish, Malay and Korean) this was in fact the case, even in sentences very clearly referring to future time. In Turkish, the future marker can be used, but there is some question as to when and why. In Hebrew, the future must be used in any 'if' or when clause as well as in the consequent clause.

Spanish
si estudias mucho el año entrante saldrás mejor
"If you study hard next year, you'll do better!"

Alsation
we ne pol ftirçés san vere xe xax ge'n
"When we reach the upper end we'll go."

Malay
jika dia pergi dia akan bawa? kereta tia
"If he goes, he'll take his car!"

Korean
John-i náil o-myén sülê po késs ta
tomorrow come-if ask will deal
"John will ask him if he comes tomorrow!"

Turkish
In normal future-referent 'if' clauses, where no particular outcome is being predicted, the corss is used:

ahmet gelirse ban gidéjilem 'If Ahmet comes, I will go'
"come-sor-if I go-fut-list a."

But for situations where there is definite evidence that the condition will be fulfilled (e.g. Ahmet has accepted the invitation), the progressive would be used in the 'if'-clause:

ahmet geliyorsa ban gelmiyejilem 'If Ahmet comes, I won't
"come-prog-if I come-fut"
"come."

The future can be used in a situation somewhat intermediate to these two:

ahmet gelejkeise ban gelmiyejilem 'If Ahmet comes, I won't come'
"come-fut-if I come-neg fut"

Hebrew

Hebrew requires the use of the future marker in both condition and consequent:

"in atá ti'ye otí anaxmô nesév yaxad
If you see-me we sit-fut together
"If you see me, we will sit together!"

kase atá thiye benešré atá tilmád be universita
when you be-fut old-20 you learn-fut in university
"When you are twenty years old, you will study in the university!"
Conclusion

In all the languages included in the study except Hebrew, there was at least one other verbal construction available for referring to future time:

- Present tense as future: English, Spanish, Aisatan, Malay, Korean
- Progressive as future: English, Spanish, Turkish
- Going-to constructions: English, Spanish

In all cases except the Turkish aorist examples, the use of the future marker indicates less certainty of the occurrence on the part of the speaker than use of either the present, present progressive or going to future. In Turkish, the use of the future marker indicates less certainty than the use of the progressive. One can therefore conclude that there is a strong indication that in those languages where there is a choice, the speaker will normally choose the future marker rather than the available alternative when he is less certain, and has less evidence at his disposal that the conditions for the occurrence of the future event will be fulfilled.

Footnotes


2. I am grateful to the following people for their cooperation in providing me with language data: Feryal Yavas, Marguerite Hessini, Abdul Aziz Idris, Nora Vera, Anapare Ntstoypo, Bati Broum, and Professor Choon-Ayu Oh.

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