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Edited by
Ronny Meyer and Lutz Edzard

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Editors' Preface

The grammatical expression of time – tense and aspect – is a well-established field of study in linguistic typology. Since Comrie's (1976; 1985) seminal work, various facets of tense and aspect, and their interrelationship have been researched, e.g. in Dahl (1985), Bybee (1985), Sasse (1991), Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994), Bhat (1999), Binnick (1991; 2012), among others.

In typological approaches, TENSE is considered a deictic category that relates the verbal EVENT (e.g. state, action, etc.) to a reference point, usually the moment of speaking, which results in the putative three-way tense distinction between present, past and future. Many languages, however, only distinguish between two values, viz. past vs. non-past or present vs. non-present; a few languages have more specific tense values, like, e.g. near vs. remote past, definite vs. indefinite future, etc. Markers for tense often grammaticalize from lexical elements (e.g. auxiliary verbs) or aspect markers, and thus have a very generalized semantics that does not interact with the semantics of the verbs to which they are attached.

Markers for aspect behave differently. GRAMMATICAL or VIEWPOINT ASPECT, i.e. basically the two-way distinction between perfective vs. imperfective expressed through verb inflection, is not a deictic category but represents the speaker's view on a verbal event. The perfective aspect emphasizes the inherent (potential) boundaries of an event, which often co-occurs with a past reading, whereas the imperfective aspect highlights the ongoing phase following the initial point or preceding the end point of an event. The imperfective aspect has various pragmatic interpretations, including that of a continuative or progressive, iterative, habitual, or general present. Certain temporal phases of a verb can also be encoded by periphrastic constructions or verb derivation, which consequently function as expressions for a specific PHASAL ASPECT. Finally, the inherent temporal structure of a verb, its LEXICAL ASPECT, is construed through a combination of the semantic features dynamicity, durativity and telicity yielding the well-known four-way distinction between states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements.

Despite the long-lasting and diversified cross-linguistic interest in tense/aspect, most grammatical descriptions of Cushitic, Ethio-Semitic, Nilo-Saharan, and Omotic languages spoken at the Horn of Africa do not deal in much

detail with the expression of time. Often, only a summary of inflectional verb paradigms (which as often as not are entirely based on elicited data), and their approximate translations into English or other languages are provided. Not much is said about the origin of these paradigms, their meaning range, discourse function, and semantic interaction with each other, or with time adverbials. For other language families, however, comprehensive studies on tense/aspect are available, e.g. Dahl (2000) for European languages, or Nurse (2008) for Bantu languages.

In order to develop a better understanding of time concepts in languages spoken at the Horn of Africa, and to gain new insights in typological and areal-linguistic issues related to the expression of time in these languages, Ronny Meyer (Addis Ababa University), Lutz Edzard (University of Erlangen-Nürnberg and University of Oslo), Yvonne Treis (CNRS/LLACALAN, Paris), and Ewa Wołk-Sore (University of Warsaw) organized the panel “Time in the Languages of the Horn of Africa” at the 19th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, which took place from 24–28 August 2015 in Warsaw under the theme “Ethiopia – Diversity and Interconnections through Space and Time”.

The panel presentations had an unintentional bias towards Ethio-Semitic, to which nine of the fourteen presentations were devoted. Four papers were concerned with Cushitic languages, but only one with an Omotic language. Two research topics dominated the presentations: in-depth studies on tense/aspect systems of individual languages, and typological contrastive comparison of specific tense/aspect features in closely related languages. All of the eight contributions in the present collective volume emerge from the panel presentations and the subsequent discussions.

The first section of the present volume consists of five contributions dealing with tense/aspect phenomena in individual Ethio-Semitic languages. Maria Bulakh investigates the interplay between the lexical semantics of Gə‘əz stative verbs and their temporal meaning (implication) in the three basic verb conjugations for the perfective and imperfective aspect, and the converb. She argues that stative verbs in Gə‘əz belong to two broad semantic classes, viz. inchoative-stative verbs and verbs that denote a continuous event with potential starting and end points.

Fekede Menuta outlines the main features of grammatical time expressions in Gumer, a little-known Gurage variety of the Chaha-group (Central Western Gurage). The contrast between the perfective and imperfective viewpoint aspect is the central feature of verb inflection. Gumer, furthermore, grammaticalized periphrastic auxiliary constructions to denote a future event without speci-

fic modal implications vs. a less probable future (or past) event. Tense marking is also found in the derivation of certain time adverbs, which occur in pairs of complementarily forms for past or future events.

Two contributions are concerned with particular parts of the Amharic tense/aspect system. Magdalena Krzyżanowska describes the interface of tense/aspect with epistemic modality in complex predicates containing the invariable auxiliary *yə-hon-all* (3SM-be(come)IPFV-AUX.NPST), i.e. the 3SM imperfective of the inchoative-stative verb *honä* ‘be(come)’ followed by the non-past auxiliary *allä*. Epistemic modality is concerned with the speaker’s evaluation of the degree of validity of a given proposition, which involves two temporal reference points: (i) the moment of the speaker’s assessment of a proposition, and (ii) the time of the event denoted by the proposition. The auxiliary *yəhonall* combines with three types of co-verbs, which all are dependent verbs syntactically, viz. plain verbs in the imperfective or converb (traditionally called “gerund”) conjugation, or derived progressive forms consisting of a verb in the perfective conjugation marked by the prefix *əyyä-*. The co-verbs convey aspectual meaning, but also code a relative tense with the moment of the speaker’s epistemic assessment as reference point. The moment of the epistemic assessment typically coincides with the moment of speaking, but can also be the past in narrative texts. There is no formal distinction between them.

The other contribution with a sole focus on Amharic is Derib Ado’s *Metaphors of time in Amharic*, which is not concerned with the grammatical coding of tense/aspect, but with the pragmatic extension of time concepts in metaphorical expression. After a general overview about frequent time metaphors in Amharic, such as TIME IS AN OPPONENT, CONTAINER, LOAD, RESOURCE, Derib Ado concentrates on the metaphor TIME IS SPACE and its various facets. Time in Amharic is dominantly conceptualized on a two-dimensional horizontal axis, on which ego faces the future, whereas the past is behind him. On this axis, time, as well as ego might move, commonly from the future to the past. The reverse direction, past to present/future, only occurs in imaginary discourse about past events.

The last contribution in this section – and the only one on a language not belonging to the Ethio-Semitic family – is Shimelis Mazangia’s account of tense/aspect in the Cushitic language Oromo, more precisely its Eastern or Hararghe variety (with additional comparative data from the Western or Wallagga Oromo variety, and Amharic). Oromo verbs primarily inflect for the perfective and imperfective aspect, which denote several semantic sub-categories. Only prospective and continuous events are marked by periphrastic con-

structions, which usually are based on copula clauses. It is assumed that verbs in the two primary conjugations conflate aspect with tense by default, thus past perfective vs. non-past imperfective. However, they also denote events with the respective other time reference, so that they most probably are unmarked for tense. Specific time reference is commonly marked by adverbs, or temporal auxiliaries. A distinct past auxiliary can optionally refer to a habitual event in the past, or mark past reference in periphrastic constructions (e.g. the prospective or progressive). Another auxiliary derived from the verb ‘exist’ primarily emphasizes the continuity of an event (in the past or non-past). Secondly, this existential auxiliary is developing into a non-past marker, as can clearly be seen in the Wallagga variety. It grammaticalized the combination of converb plus auxiliary as separate construction denoting the perfect, in which the past perfect contains the past auxiliary, but the present perfect the existential auxiliary. The Hararghe variety, in contrast, includes the perfect reading within the semantics of the perfective.

The remaining three contributions are comparative studies of tense/aspect phenomena in various Ethio-Semitic languages. Lutz Edzard’s contribution is an in-depth study of experiencer constructions and impersonal verbs in Ethio-Semitic (with focus on Amharic) from a Semitic and general typological perspective. He shows that these constructions most frequently denote bodily sensations in Ethio-Semitic (or more specifically Amharic), but rarely include verbs of perception. The grammatical encoding of the experiencer (agent-like through subject suffixes vs. patient-like through object suffixes) supports the cross-linguistic hierarchies for control and affectedness.

Based on a corpus of Hebrew news texts, which were translated into Amharic and Tigrinya, Olga Kapeliuk contrastively compares the occurrence of specific Amharic and Tigrinya verb forms. Although the two Ethio-Semitic languages are structurally similar, there are major differences in the use of auxiliary verbs in main-clause predicates. As a result, identical translations into Amharic and Tigrinya are rather few in number. The Amharic texts are more fluent and follow closer the Hebrew source, while the Tigrinya texts tend to be more complex, and to contain longer sentences.

In the last contribution, Ronny Meyer deals with the grammaticalization of tense in Ethio-Semitic by comparing the structure and function of main clause predicates in Gə‘əz, Amharic, and Muher. Tense as a grammatical category distinguishing between past vs. non-past is an innovative feature in modern Ethio-Semitic. It emerged as an optional feature in Gə‘əz, probably first in copula clauses, and then diffused to main clauses with an imperfective verb. Subse-

quently, tense became an inherent part of periphrastic constructions, mainly the perfect, proximative and progressive. These constructions are limited to main clauses, as subordinate predicates usually only express viewpoint aspect but not tense.

A few recurrent issues can be observed in the multitude of tense/aspect phenomena discussed in the individual contributions. Stative verbs in Ethio-Semitic languages apparently belong to two or more semantic sub-classes (Bulakh; Kapeliuk; Edzard; Meyer). Their lexical semantics always includes a potential (initial) boundary, i.e. total-stative verbs seem to be completely absent, or to be quite rare at least.

The primary temporal feature, marked through the basic verb conjugations, is viewpoint aspect, i.e. the binary distinction between perfective vs. imperfective. This conclusion is supported by two phenomena: First, stative verbs in the perfective conjugation have by default a present reading, but can also have a past implication in marked contexts, as shown in the contributions by Bulakh; Edzard; Kapeliuk; Meyer. Second, (plain) imperfective main-clause verbs are typically interpreted as non-past events, but can also refer to the past (cf. Shimelis; Meyer). Thus, the tense interpretation of the two basic conjugations interacts with the lexical aspect of verbs, and may vary depending on the discourse context, which is a strong indicator that they mark aspect, not tense.

Grammatical tense is usually marked through temporal auxiliaries to distinguish past from non-past events (cf. Fekede; Shimelis; Kapeliuk; Meyer). Commonly, a distinct past auxiliary combines with imperfective verbs, or is part of periphrastic constructions (including the perfect) in affirmative main clauses. Non-past in these types of predicates, however, is often not overtly marked, but simply indicated through the absence of the past auxiliary. Although the existential verb/copula (which initially might have emphasized ongoing events) may develop into a non-past auxiliary, its combination with an imperfective verb may still retain a tense-neutral continuous reading in certain contexts. Therefore, complex predicates consisting of an imperfective co-verb and the existential auxiliary can also refer to past events, as observed in Amharic (for which cf. also Krzyżanowska) and Oromo.

The perfect seems to be an innovative grammatical category, which is typically a complex predicate consisting of a converb (or converb equivalent) as co-verb and a temporal auxiliary (which can also be a zero marker through the contrast with an overt past auxiliary). Initially, the perfect reading was certainly part of the perfective conjugation (cf. Bulakh; Shimelis; Meyer). But then the perfect grammaticalized as a separate morphosyntactic form, and apparently

became a feature of the Ethiopian language area, which may be absent in peripheral varieties, as clearly shown in Shimelis' comparison of the perfect in Hararghe vs. Wallagga Oromo. On the other hand, the two distinct morphological categories for the perfective and the perfect may again merge into a single form, namely that of the innovative perfect, as can be observed in Gunnän Gurage (cf. Fekede; Meyer).

It should be noted that the transcription of linguistic data has not been unified in the collective volume, i.e. representations according to IPA occur side-by-side with specialized (Ethio-)Semitic transcription systems (sometimes even for the same language). Therefore, a single sound might be transcribed variously, but it is consistently represented in the individual contributions.

Finally, we want to express our gratitude to the NORHED project *Linguistic Capacity Building: Tools for the Inclusive Development of Ethiopia* (jointly conducted by Addis Ababa University, Hawassa University, the University of Oslo, and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology) for providing financial support to the panelists from Ethiopia, the University of Oslo for its technical support, and the organizing committee of the 19th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies for hosting our panel.

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Ronny Meyer and Lutz Edzard

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