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Edited by Eser Erguvanlı Taylan

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A note on mood, modality, tense and aspect affixes in Turkish

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The limited goal of this contribution is to analyse the order of the mood, modality, tense and aspect, verbal suffixes of Turkish in the light of my (1999) proposal on the functional structure of the clause. My hope is that the exercise, besides explaining away certain apparent counterexamples to a rigid hierarchy of functional projections, may shed a partly new light on this area of the grammar of Turkish.

In Cinque (1999), I examined the relative order of free (particles) and bound (suffixes) grammatical morphemes corresponding to mood, modality, tense, aspect and voice distinctions in the languages of the world. The recurrent picture that one finds in this domain is that they not only are rigidly ordered with respect to each other (as partly anticipated in such works as Bybee 1985; Foley and Van Valin 1984; and Dik 1989), but that each of the mood, modality, tense, aspect, and voice categories is made up, at a finer level, of a number of distinct heads, which also appear to be rigidly ordered.

The striking match between the order of these grammatical heads and the order of the corresponding adverbs was further taken there to suggest a rich and articulated functional structure above the lexical VP of the clause, where each adverb class corresponds to a mood, modality, tense, aspect or voice head in a one-to-one fashion (as does the specifier to a head in a classical X-bar structure — Chomsky 1970; Kayne 1994).

The order of such X-bar projections is approximately that shown in (1).  

1. \[ \text{Mood}_{\text{speech act}} > \text{Mood}_{\text{evaluative}} > \text{Mood}_{\text{evidential}} > \text{Mod}_{\text{epistemic}} > \text{TP}_{\text{Past}} > \text{TP}_{\text{future}} > \text{Mood}_{\text{irrealis}} > \text{TP}_{\text{anterior}} > \text{Mod}_{\text{alethic}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{habitual}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{repetitive(1)}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{frequentative(1)}} > \text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{categorize(1)}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{terminative}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{continuative}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{perfect}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{retrospective}} \]
Before seeing other such cases in Turkish itself, let us procede and try to establish the relative ordering of a number of other suffixes in this language. Granting the essential correctness of Baker’s (1985, 1988) Mirror Principle, I will assume that an outer suffix corresponds to a functional head higher than that corresponding to an inner suffix, disregarding the insertion of auxiliary verbs to bear (outer) suffixes that for morphological reasons cannot stack onto some inner suffixes, as is the case with possibility -(y)Abil- and PERFECT -miş in (5).\(^4\)

\[(5)\] Mary John-un evlen-miş ol-abil-ecğ-in -i söyl-tiýor M. J.-gen get married -PERF be-may/can -FUT -POS/ACC SBY-PROP 'Mary says that John may have gotten married (by now).'
(Yavaş 1980: 77)

Here, -(y)Abil- cannot be stacked onto -miş, for reasons that remain to be understood; hence the insertion of the auxiliary to support the outer suffix which otherwise would remain stranded. Ignoring the complication introduced by the insertion of auxiliaries, (5) provides evidence for the order V-(PERFECT)-POSSIBILITY-FUTURE (which in turn suggests that future tense is higher than ALETHIC modality (which is higher than PERFECT aspect).\(^5\) Adding this relative order to (4), we get the order in (6) (I return below to the position of PERFECT aspect):

\[(6)\] Fut > Mod\(^{\text{Alethic}}\) > Neg > Mod\(^{\text{Ability}}\) (V)

Like the mA negation suffix, also the PROGRESSIVE aspect suffix -(I)yor-, appears to intervene between POSSIBILITY -(y)Abil- and ABILITY/PERMISSION -(y)Abil-, for it follows ABILITY/PERMISSION -(y)Abil- (cf. (7a)), but it precedes POSSIBILITY -(y)Abil- (cf. (7b)), and is found between the two, when these cooccur (cf. (7c)):

\[(7a)\] Oku-yabil-iyor-um (Kornfilt 1997:374)
read-ABIL-PROG-1SG
'I am being able to read.'

\[(7b)\] Oku-yor ol-abil-ir (Kornfilt, personal communication)
read-PROG be-ABIL-AOR
'He might be reading.'

\[(7c)\] Oku-yabil-iyor ol-abil-ir (Kornfilt, personal communication)
read-PROG be-ABIL-AOR
'He might be being able to read.'
As shown by (8), -(I)yor- follows the -mA- negation suffix (which, by the Mirror Principle, indicates that it is located in a head higher than the negative head):

(8) Koş-mu-yor (van Schaaik 1994: 40)

run-NEG-PROG

'He isn’t running.'

The relative orders of Turkish suffixes seen so far are thus evidence for the order of heads shown in (9):

(9) Fut > Mod_Alethic > Asp_Progressive > Neg > Mod_Ability (> V)

Similarly, the perfect aspect suffix -mıs appears to be outside ability/permission -(y)Abil- (10a) and inside possibility -(y)Abil- (10b), and is found to separate them when they cooccur (10c):

(10) a. Oku-yabıl-mıș ol-ur (Kornfilt, personal communication)
    read-ABIL-PERF be-AOR
    'He has been able to read.'

b. Oku-mış ol-abil-ır (Kornfilt, personal communication)
    read-PERF be-ABIL-AOR
    'He might have read.'

c. Oku-yabıl-mıș ol-abil-ır (Kornfilt, personal communication)
    read-PERF be-ABIL-AOR
    'He might have been able to read.'

The perfect aspect suffix -mıs, like the progressive aspect suffix -(I)yor-, occurs outside the negative suffix -mA-. See (11):

    turk-become-CAUS-PASS-NEG-PERF-pl-ABL-2PL
    'You are of those who didn’t have themselves been turkified.'

It thus seems to fall, like -(I)yor-, between the modal of alethic possibility and negation:

(12) Fut > Mod_Alethic > Asp_Progressive > Neg > Mod_Ability (> V)

Asp_Perfect

We can ask what the relative order is between perfect aspect and progressive aspect. Quite generally, perfect aspect appears to be higher than progressive aspect. This is shown directly by English ((13a)) and Temne ((13b)), among other languages, and (in the reverse order) by the serialization of the corresponding suffixes in Imbabura Quechua ((13c)):

(13) a. John has been winning (English)
    J. PRES PERF PROG

b. i tê po yîrê ke-ko (Temne — cf. Cinque 1999: 193)
   I FUT PERF PROG go
   'I will have been going.'

   come-PROG-PERF-1SG
   'I have been coming.'

Turkish in this respect appears problematic. For one thing, the location of perfect aspect -mıs after progressive aspect -(I)yor is given as rather marginal by Yavaş (1980: 63) (see (14a)); secondly, the opposite order between the two is judged as perfectly acceptable by Kornfilt (1997: 363) (see (14b)):

(14) a. ?John dön çalis-yor ol-muş ol-mali
    J. yesterday work-PROG be-PERF be-must
    'J. must have been working yesterday.' (Yavaş 1980: 63)

b. Hasan böylelike yarış-1 kazan-muş ol-uır-du
    H. thus competition-ACC win-PERF be-PROG-PAST
    'Hasan was thus being the winner of the competition.'
    (Kornfilt 1997: 363)

Whatever the reasons for the marginality of (14a), it appears that the order V-mıs Aux-(I)yor of (14b) receives an interpretation which is rather different from the one expected. Kornfilt (1997: 363) glosses (14b) as "...was being the winner", rather than “...was having won...”, with what looks like a resulting state reading.

I would like to propose that -mıs is actually ambiguous between a (marginal) perfect aspect interpretation, when it is located higher than progressive aspect (as in (14a)), and a pure resultative aspect interpretation, which is lower than progressive aspect (in fact one of the lowest heads, perhaps). In (15), a sentence given by Kornfilt (1997: 363), the two (perfect-mıs and resultative -mıs) are found to (marginally) cooccur:

(15) ?Hasan böylelike yarış-1 kazan-muş ol-muş-tu
    H. thus competition-ACC win-RES(?) be-PERF-PAST
    'H. had thus become the winner of the competition.' (Kornfilt 1997: 363)

If correct, then, the order of heads displayed by Turkish so far is:

(16) Fut > Mod_Alethic > Asp_Perfect > Asp_Progressive > Neg > Mod_Ability (> V)

Asp_Resultative
-Miş has another well-known interpretation in Turkish; that of a reportive past.⁸

(17) a. Hasan dün opera-yà git-miş
H. yesterday opera-DAT go-REP.PAST
‘H. reportedly went to the opera yesterday.’

There is some evidence that under this interpretation it occupies a functional head that is higher than that occupied when it has the perfect (and, a fortiori, the resultative) aspect interpretation.

In its 'reportive (past) tense' interpretation it follows the future tense suffix ((18a)); in its perfect aspect interpretation, it precedes it ((18b)):

(18) a. John Türkiye-ye gid-ecek-miş
J. T-DAT go-FUT-REP
‘Reportedly, John will go to Turkey.’ (Yaşav 1980:41) (reported)

b. John hafta-ya tez-in-i bitir-miş ol-acak
J. week-DAT thesis-PASS-ACC finish-PERF BE-FUT
‘J. will have finished his thesis (by) next week (*Apparently/reportedly J. will finish…’) (Yaşav 1980:74)

More generally, as Kornfilt (1997) notes, when ‘-miş for the reported past is the first suffix in a morphological sequence including the conditional form [and other tense markers (p.546, fn59)], its function is that of perfective aspect rather than that of a tense marker’ (p.344). Each usage, then, is apparently possible only relatively to a specific position in the sequence of suffixes. A case in point is (19), from Yaşav (1980:62):

(19) John çaliş-miş-ti
J. work-PERF-PAST
‘J. had worked (*Apparently/reportedly J. worked’)

In sum, -miş can either encode resultative aspect, perfect aspect, or reportive/inferrential/evaluative past. For the latter usage, it is tempting to propose that -miş is generated in TPast and then raised to either ModEpistemic (inferential), or MoodEnvironmental (reportive), or MoodEvaluative (surprise/unexpectedness). If so, Turkish would give evidence for the higher functional heads of (1) shown in (20), which combined with (16) gives (21):

(20) ...MoodEvaluative > MoodEnvironmental > ModEpistemic > Tpast ...

(21) MoodEvaluative > MoodEnvironmental > ModEpistemic > Tpast > TFuture > ModAethic > AspPerfect > AspProgressive > Neg > ModAbility/AspResultive (> V)

To recapitulate, both the -(y)Abîl and the -miş suffixes can apparently occur, even simultaneously, different slots (heads), each corresponding to a distinct function.¹⁰

(22) Olu-yabil-mišt ol-abîl-ir
read-ABL-PERF BE-POSS-B-OR
‘He might have been able to read.’ (Kornfilt, personal communication)

(23) Rejim yap-mišt-miş
diet make-PERF-REP-PAST
‘Reportedly, he dieted.’ (Yaşav 1980:68)

(24) Hasan bölüllikle yârış-i kazan-mišt ol-muş-tu
H. thus competition-ACC win-RESULT(?) be-PERF-PAST
‘H. had thus become the winner of the competition.’ (Kornfilt 1997:363)

Other suffixes of Turkish appear to occupy different positions, depending on the function they perform.

One of these is the (non reportive) past suffix -di, which in addition to this usage apparently has (pace Yaşav 1980:Ch.2) a usage as an Anterior Tense marker (Aksu-Koç 1988:20; Kornfilt 1997:349).¹¹ The two can, in fact, cooccur, yielding the pluperfect interpretation:¹²

(25) a. Hasan dün saat beş-te ödev-in-i
H. yesterday o’clock five-LOC assignment-3SG-ACC
bit-IR-di-y-dî finish-CAUS-ANT-Y-PAST
‘H. had finished his assignment yesterday at five o’clock.’ (Kornfilt 1998)

Some indications exist that -(y)AcAK too may be ambiguous between two functions: a pure Future Tense interpretation (“will”) and a Prospective Aspect interpretation (“be about to/almost”), with, as a consequence, a different location in the hierarchy of (1). Indications to this effect may be I) the double translations that are often assigned to the morpheme (cf. (26)); II) the unequivocal Prospective Aspect rendering of -(y)AcAK when it is used as a participle not allowing stacking of -DI (cf. (27b)), vs. the Future Tense reading when it allows stacking of -DI (27a); and III) the sequences “eeck ol-muş-tu” and “eeck ol-uyor” found by Gerjan van Schaaiik in his corpus (and pointed out by him in his talk — van Schaaiik 1999).¹³
(26) Yarın yağmur yağ-acak
    tomorrow rain fall-fut-or-prosp
    ‘Tomorrow it will/is going to rain.’ (cf. Yavaş 1980:89)

(27) a. Dün gel-ecek-ti
    yesterday come-fut-past
    ‘He was going to come yesterday.’ (Yavaş 1980:23)

b. Hasan kapı-yi aç-acak ol-du
    H. door-acc open-fut-prosp be/become-past
    ‘Hasan was about to open/almost opened the door.’
    (Kornfilt 1997:341)

Similarly (if not more clearly), the suffix -(y)-sA appears to be ambiguous between two functions: one as a conditional complementizer, and one as an irrealis marker. An indication that, depending on interpretation, it fills different positions in the hierarchy of (1) is given by the order of -(y)-sA with respect to other suffixes whose position can be determined unambiguously. So, for example, Conditional -(y)-sA follows the Reportive PAST suffix (cf. (28)), which follows, among others, the Aspect suffixes and the absolute Future Tense suffix. This suggests that the corresponding functional head is higher than at least T_Past:

(28) oku-yor-muș-sa-m
    read-prog-rep-past-cond-1sg
    ‘If I am/was said to be reading’ (Kornfilt 1997:367)

When, on the other hand, -(y)-sA precedes T_Past (as in (29)), its interpretation is that of a counterfactual conditional, or a wish referring to the past (cf. Kornfilt 1997:368), which leads me to conjecture that it occupies the lower MoodIrrealis head:

(29) a. Oku-sa-y-müş
    read-cond-cop-rep-past
    ‘They say that if he were to read.’ or ‘They say “If only he would read!”’
    (Kornfilt 1997:368)

b. Oku-sa-y-di-n
    read-cond-y-past-2sg
    ‘Had you read/if only you had read!’
    (Kornfilt 1997:368)

Another suffix that appears to have various (related) usages is -(m)All, which ranges from a meaning of obligation ((30a)), to a meaning of aetheletic necessity ((30b)), to an epistemic meaning ((30c)): 15

(30) a. Oku-mah-yım
    read-oblig-1sg
    ‘I have to read.’

b. John hafta-ya evlen-miş ol-mah
    J. week-dat marry-perf be-necessary
    ‘John must have gotten married (by) next week.’ (Yavaş 1980:76)

c. Hasan orada ol-mah
    H. there be-epistem
    ‘Hasan must be there.’
    (Kornfilt 1997:376)

What remains to be seen is whether it occupies one or more positions, depending on interpretation. The position of the suffix in its alethic reading of necessity appears to fall in between MoodIrrealis and AspPerfect, as expected from (1). See the contrast between (31a) and (b): 16

(31) a. *Git-müş ol-mah ol-sa-ydî
    go-perf be-necessary be-irr-past
    ‘Had s/he have to have gone.’ (Kornfilt, personal communication)

b. *Git-miş ol-sa ol-mah-ydî
    (Kornfilt, personal communication)

If the above interpretation of the facts is correct, there may be no real reason to conclude from the apparent variable ordering of certain suffixes in Turkish that “the order among inflectional suffixes is slightly flexible [while] grammatical function changing affixes are rigidly fixed “ (in the partial order: V-recipocal-causative-passive)(Göksel 1993:18). Functional heads are rigidly fixed, though one and the same morpheme, by filling different heads (with concomitantly different functions), may give the impression of changing places.

Notes

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1. Although no language (with the possible partial exception of Eskimo-Aleut languages) displays the entire array of functional heads, languages do display the entire array of functional specifiers (AdverbPhrases), thus pointing to the universality of such structure.

3. This order is interestingly matched (in the expected mirror image forms) by the order of alethic possibility modals and root (ability/permission) modals in such double modal varieties as Hawick Scots:

i. He'll might could do it (Brown 1992: 75)

put possibil v

In both cases, the ability (/permission) modal head appears to be closer to the verb (stem) than the possibility.

4. See Kornfilt (1996) for arguments that, even in the case of certain suffixes apparently stacked onto another suffix, there is an overt, -y-, or abstract, -0-, copula, separating them and supporting the outer suffix.

5. Note that the order future > alethic possibility is also overtly displayed in the Hawick Scots example (i) in Fin3.

6. The marginality of (15) is perhaps related to that of (14a). Yavaş and Kornfilt appear to give to these sentences the same grammaticality judgment (i) rather than *.

7. The fact that the progressive form of a resulting state is possible in Turkish but not in English is perhaps to be related to the fact that in Turkish the -(O)yr form is possible with stative verbs as well (cf. (i)); a fact which may indicate that it is more likely a continuous aspect rather than a progressive aspect suffix, as Kornfilt (1997:357) conjectures.

i. Hasan fazla çabuk konuș-tug-um-u bil-iyor-du

H. too fast talk-3sg-acc know-prog-past

'H. knew that he was speaking too fast.' (Kornfilt 1997:357)

8. As in other languages, the same form can be used to denote the inferential character of the assertion, or surprise/unpredictableness (its 'admirative', i.e. evaluative, usage). See (i):

a. John bugün çalıṣ-iyor-muş

J. today work-prog-infer

'Apparently, John is working today.' (Yavaş 1980:44) (inferential, or reportive)

b. Ne de çok ebise-m var-muş!

what also a lot dress-my exist-unexp

'How many dresses I have!' (Yavaş 1980:47) (surprise)

9. The future in the past (or "conditional") form is also used in Italian to convey a report:

i. Gianni sarebbe morto ieri

G. would have died (future in the past) yesterday

'They say that G. died yesterday.'

10. From (23) and (24), one should expect the marginal possibility of something like (i), where the three -m³f occur simultaneously. Jaldin Kornfilt (personal communication) tells me that for her (i) is indeed possible with the same grammaticality status as (24):

i. ?Hasan böylelikle yarış-1 kazan-muş ol-muş-muş

H. thus competition-acc win-res(?i) be-perf-rep-past

'Has had reportedly thus become the winner of the competition.'

11. "Examples like [Hasan bağa ye-di 'H. ate the fish/had eaten the fish'] are systematically ambiguous between a simple past reading (the first translation) and a present perfect reading (the second translation)" (Kornfilt 1997:349, who also refers in this connection to Lewis 1975:127 and Johanson 1971:67).

12. The 'distant past' interpretation which can be imposed to -DI + -DI sequences, as in (i) (Yavaş 1980:16) is not incompatible with taking -DI to be both a Past Tense and an Anterior Tense morpheme. The Italian Pluperfect has a similar occasional 'distant past' interpretation (Avevo pensato ti facessi piacere 'I thought it would please you'). Other cases where the same morpheme expresses both Past Tense and Anterior Tense are found in Korean (Cique 1999:53), and in Sanan and Haitian Creole (Cique 1999:61f). Cf. also English -ed.

i. Bir zaman-lar John ile tanış-tü-y-di-m

one time-pl J. with meet-DI-cop-DI-1sg

'I once met John.'

13. In "ceck ol-muş-tu" and "ceck ol-uyor", -(y)AcAK appears lower than perfect aspect and progressive aspect, respectively. These are positions inaccessible to a pure (or absolute) future Tense. The second (of which he found 4 examples) is particularly telling as Cique (1999:75) documents the order progressive aspect > prospective aspect (and their adjacency) in many languages. Also see Cique (1999:209n63) for languages in which the future Tense morpheme is identical to the prospective aspect morpheme. It could turn out, judging from II and III in the text, that participial -(y)AcAK, which does not allow stacking of other suffixes, is the form specialized for Prospective Aspect.

14. Alternating with -(y)-sA in the position preceding TPat is the optative suffix -(y)A, another Irrealis suffix:

i. Oku-ya-y-di-m

read-opt-y-past-1sg

'Would that I had read.' (Kornfilt 1997:372)

As Kornfilt notes (p.372), (i) can be used also in place of (29b), and with the same interpretation as (29b). Eser Erguvanli-Taylan (personal communication) informs me that the structuralist tradition also recognized two separate uses of -(y)-sA -sA, for what I called "Irrealis", and -(y)-sA, for what I called "Conditional".

15. In (30b), it can also have an epistemic interpretation.

16. The "aorist" suffix -(A)r, which expresses the generic (and habitual) present, was not discussed here, as it is unclear to me which head, it can fill. From (i-a-b), it would seem it can occupy a head between TPat and Mod Alethic of Possibility (but it could be that it can occupy more than one):

i. a. Hasan piyano çal-ar-di

H. piano play-aor-past

'Hasan used to play the piano.'

b. John evlen-miş ol-abıl-ir

J. get married-perf be-possib-aor

'John may have gotten married (by now).' (Yavaş 1980:76)
References


