

# Athens Journal of Philology

*TAM Special Issue*

Quarterly Academic Periodical, Volume 13, Issue 1

Published by the Athens Institute

URL: <https://www.athensjournals.gr/ajp> Email: [journals@atiner.gr](mailto:journals@atiner.gr)

e-ISSN: 2241-8385 DOI: 10.30958/ajp

March 2026

# Athens Journal of Philology

*TAM Special Issue*

Quarterly Academic Periodical, Volume 13, Issue 1, March 2026

Published by the Athens Institute

URL: <https://www.athensjournals.gr/ajp> Email: [journals@atiner.gr](mailto:journals@atiner.gr)

e-ISSN: 2241-8385 DOI: 10.30958/ajp

## Front Pages

*KRASIMIR KABAČIEV*

[Tense-Aspect-Modality Issues in and Across Languages: With Special Emphasis on the Perfect](#)

*SHINIAN WU*

[Pragmatic Dimensions of Aspects in English: Theory and Practice](#)

*DESISLAVA DIMITROVA*

[The Greek Present Perfect as an Exponent of Cancellability](#)

*SEMA KUTSAROVA*

[The Phenomenon of Speaker Ghosting and the Cancellability Feature of the Turkish -miş Forms](#)

# Athens Journal of Philology

*Published by the Athens Institute*

## Editor

- **Dr. Stamos Metzidakis**, Head, Literature Unit, Athens Institute & Professor Emeritus of French and Comparative Literature, Washington University in Saint Louis, USA & Adjunct Professor of French, Hunter College-CUNY, USA.

## Co-Editors

- **Dr. Krasimir Kabakciev**, Deputy Director, Arts, Humanities and Education Division, Athens Institute.
- **Dr. Haralambos Symeonidis**, Head, Languages & Linguistics Unit, Athens Institute & Professor, University of Kentucky, USA.
- **Dr. Paola Partenza**, Academic Member, Athens Institute & Associate Professor, "G. d'Annunzio" University, Italy.
- **Dr. William Davis**, Deputy Head, Literature Unit, Athens Institute & Professor, Colorado College, USA.
- **Dr. Aleksandra Tryniecka**, Deputy Head, Literature Unit, Athens Institute & Assistant Professor Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Poland.

<https://www.athensjournals.gr/ajp/eb>

## Administration of the Journal

1. Vice President of Publications: Dr Zoe Boutsioli
2. General Managing Editor of all Athens Institute's Publications: Ms. Afrodete Papanikou
3. ICT Managing Editor of all Athens Institute's: Mr. Kostas Spyropoulos
4. Managing Editor of this Journal: Ms. Eirini Lentzou

*Athens Institute is an Athens-based World Association of Academics and Researchers based in Athens. Athens Institute is an independent and non-profit Association with a Mission to become a forum where Academics and Researchers from all over the world can meet in Athens, exchange ideas on their research and discuss future developments in their disciplines, as well as engage with professionals from other fields. Athens was chosen because of its long history of academic gatherings, which go back thousands of years to Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. Both these historic places are within walking distance from Athens Institute's downtown offices. Since antiquity, Athens was an open city. In the words of Pericles, Athens "...is open to the world, we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing". ("Pericles' Funeral Oration", in Thucydides, The History of the Peloponnesian War). It is Athens Institute's mission to revive the glory of Ancient Athens by inviting the World Academic Community to the city, to learn from each other in an environment of freedom and respect for other people's opinions and beliefs. After all, the free expression of one's opinion formed the basis for the development of democracy, and Athens was its cradle. As it turned out, the Golden Age of Athens was in fact, the Golden Age of the Western Civilization. Education and (Re)searching for the 'truth' are the pillars of any free (democratic) society. This is the reason why Education and Research are the two core words in Athens Institute's name.*

The *Athens Journal of Philology* (AJP) is an Open Access quarterly double-blind peer reviewed journal and considers papers from all areas of sports and related sciences. Many of the papers in this journal have been presented at the various conferences sponsored by the [Languages & Linguistics Unit](#) and the [Literature Unit](#) of the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER). All papers are subject to ATINER's [Publication Ethical Policy and Statement](#).

Athens Journal of Philology - TAM Special Issue  
ISSN NUMBER: 2241-8385 - DOI: 10.30958/ajp  
Volume 13, Issue 1, March 2026  
Download the entire issue ([PDF](#))

**Front Pages** i-viii

[Tense-Aspect-Modality Issues in and Across Languages: With Special Emphasis on the Perfect](#) 9

*Krasimir Kabakčiev*

[Pragmatic Dimensions of Aspects in English: Theory and Practice](#) 29

*Shinian Wu*

[The Greek Present Perfect as an Exponent of Cancellability](#) 45

*Desislava Dimitrova*

[The Phenomenon of Speaker Ghosting and the Cancellability Feature of the Turkish -miş Forms](#) 57

*Sema Kutsarova*

# Athens Journal of Philology

## Editorial and Reviewers' Board

### Editors

- **Dr. Stamos Metzidakis**, Head, Literature Unit, Athens Institute & Professor Emeritus of French and Comparative Literature, Washington University in Saint Louis, USA & Adjunct Professor of French, Hunter College-CUNY, USA.

### Co-Editors

- **Dr. Krasimir Kabakciev**, Deputy Director, Arts, Humanities and Education Division, Athens Institute.
- **Dr. Haralambos Symeonidis**, Head, Languages & Linguistics Unit, Athens Institute & Professor, University of Kentucky, USA.
- **Dr. Paola Partenza**, Academic Member, Athens Institute & Associate Professor, "G. d'Annunzio" University, Italy.
- **Dr. William Davis**, Deputy Head, Literature Unit, Athens Institute & Professor, Colorado College, USA.
- **Dr. Aleksandra Tryniecka**, Deputy Head, Literature Unit, Athens Institute & Assistant Professor Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Poland.

### Editorial Board

- Dr. Nicholas Pappas, Vice President of Academic Conferences and Meetings, ATINER & Professor of History, Sam Houston University, USA.
- Dr. David Philip Wick, Director, Arts, Humanities and Education Division, ATINER & Retired Professor of History, Gordon College, USA.
- Dr. Patricia Hanna, Vice President of Academic Affairs of ATINER & Professor Emerita, University of Utah, USA.
- Dr. Juliane House, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor Emeritus/Distinguished Professor, Hamburg University/Hellenic American University, Germany/USA/Greece.
- Dr. Galina Bakhtiarova, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor and Chairperson, World Languages and Literature, Western Connecticut State University, USA.
- Dr. Ioannis Christodoulou, Professor, Hellenic Open University, Greece & Lecturer, Department of Classics and Philosophy, University of Cyprus, Cyprus.
- Dr. Ugo Di Toro, Professor, Gabriele d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy.
- Dr. Michael M. Eisman, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Temple University, USA.
- Dr. Abraham Panavelil Abraham, Professor, Department of Foreign Languages, University of Nizwa, Oman.
- Dr. Jean-Paul Kouega, Professor of English Language and Linguistics, University of Yaounde I, Cameroon.
- Dr. Nicholas Meihuizen, Professor, School of Languages, English Department, North-West University, South Africa.
- Dr. Suresh Frederick, Associate Professor & UG Head, Department of English, Bishop Heber College, India.
- Dr. Ma Elena Gomez Parra, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, University of Cordoba, Spain.
- Dr. Ana Pelosi, Associate Professor, Federal University of Ceará, Brazil.
- Dr. Ramunė Kasperavičienė, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, Head of Study Programmes in Translation and Linguistics, Department of Modern Languages and Intercultural Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania.
- Dr. Victoria Tuzlukova, Academic Member, ATINER & Head of Professional Development and Research Unit, Language Centre, Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman.
- Dr. Roger S. Fisher, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor, York University- Toronto-Ontario, Canada.
- Dr. H. Simour, Assistant Professor of English and Cultural Studies, Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco.
- Dr. Nashwa Elyamany, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor and Head, Languages Department, College of Language and Communication, Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, Egypt.

- **Vice President of Publications:** Dr Zoe Boutsili
- **General Managing Editor of all Athens Institute's Publications:** Ms. Afrodete Papanikou
- **ICT Managing Editor of all Athens Institute's Publications:** Mr. Kostas Spyropoulos
- **Managing Editor of this Journal:** Ms. Eirini Lentzou

### **Reviewers' Board**

[Click Here](#)

# President's Message

All Athens Institute's publications including its e-journals are open access without any costs (submission, processing, publishing, open access paid by authors, open access paid by readers etc.) and is independent of presentations at any of the many small events (conferences, symposiums, forums, colloquiums, courses, roundtable discussions) organized by Athens Institute throughout the year and entail significant costs of participating. The intellectual property rights of the submitting papers remain with the author. Before you submit, please make sure your paper meets the [basic academic standards](#), which includes proper English. Some articles will be selected from the numerous papers that have been presented at the various annual international academic conferences organized by the different divisions and units of the Athens Institute for Education and Research. The plethora of papers presented every year will enable the editorial board of each journal to select the best, and in so doing produce a top-quality academic journal. In addition to papers presented, Athens Institute will encourage the independent submission of papers to be evaluated for publication.

The current issue is the first of the thirteenth volume of the *Athens Journal of Philology (AJP) - TAM Special Issue*, published by the [Languages & Linguistics Unit](#) and the [Literature Unit](#) of Athens Institute.

Gregory T. Papanikos  
President  
Athens Institute



## Athens Institute for Education and Research *A World Association of Academics and Researchers*

### 19<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Languages & Linguistics 6-10 July 2026, Athens, Greece

The [Languages and Linguistics Unit](#) of Athens Institute, will hold its 19<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Languages & Linguistics, 6-10 July 2026, Athens, Greece sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Philology](#). The conference is soliciting papers (in English only) from all areas of languages, linguistics and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream organizer, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2026/FORM-LNG.doc>).

#### Academic Members Responsible for the Conference

- **Dr. Valia Spiliotopoulos**, Head, [Languages & Linguistics Unit](#), ATINER and Associate Professor of Professional Practice & Academic Director Centre for English Language Learning, Teaching, and Research (CELLTR), Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, Canada

#### Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **17 March 2026**
- Acceptance of Abstract: **4 Weeks after Submission**
- Submission of Paper: **8 June 2026**

#### Social and Educational Program

The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Athens Institute.

- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit

#### Conference Fees

Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€  
Details can be found at: <https://www.atiner.gr/fees>



## Athens Institute for Education and Research

*A World Association of Academics and Researchers*

### 19<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Literature 1-5 June 2026, Athens, Greece

The [Literature Unit](#) of the Athens Institute is organizing its **19<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Literature, 1-5 June 2026, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Philology](#). The conference is soliciting papers (in English only) from all areas of Literature and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream organizer, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2026/FORM-LIT.doc>).

#### Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **14 April 2026**
- Acceptance of Abstract: **4 Weeks after Submission**
- Submission of Paper: **4 May 2026**

#### Academic Member Responsible for the Conference

- **Dr. Stamos Metzidakis**, Head, [Literature Research Unit](#), Athens Institute & Emeritus Professor of French and Comparative Literature, Washington University in Saint Louis, USA.

#### Social and Educational Program

The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Athens Institute.

- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
- Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

More information can be found here: <https://www.atiner.gr/social-program>

#### Conference Fees

Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€

Details can be found at: <https://www.atiner.gr/fees>

## **Tense-Aspect-Modality Issues in and Across Languages: With Special Emphasis on the Perfect**

*By Krasimir Kabakčiev\**

*Tense, aspect and modality are important issues relevant both in and across languages – in contrastive and typological terms, and for linguists worldwide they have always been major and very special points of interest and research. In July 2024 and July 2025, Special Sessions entitled “TAM In and Across Languages” were organized and took place within Atiner’s 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conferences on Languages and Linguistics in Athens. They drew the attention of a group of linguists who made presentations on TAM, most of which later turned into research articles published by the Athens Journal of Philology. This article offers a summary of the two Special TAM Sessions within the perspective of current theoretical linguistics and an overview of three of the papers based on the conference presentations, authored by Shinian Wu (USA), Sema Kutsarova (Bulgaria), and Desislava Dimitrova (Bulgaria).*

**Keywords:** *tense, aspect, modality, the Perfect, (non-)cancellability, (non-)witnessing, speaker ghosting, grammaticalization, pragmatic aspects of aspect*

### **Introduction**

Tense-aspect-modality (TAM) is a major structural and grammatical domain of most languages around the world – practically of all of them, although two facts must be taken into account: (1) the world’s languages are more than seven thousand and most of them are poorly described or totally undescribed; (2) many languages, notably Chinese among them, spoken by an enormous number of people, do not have any formal system of tense, though, of course, this does not mean that these languages do not distinguish between situations effectuated in the past, present or future. This special issue of the *Athens Journal of Philology* (AJP) contains four articles dealing with the complex and intricate domain of TAM, beginning with the present paper. The other three were delivered as presentations during the TAM Special Session of the 18th Annual International Conference on Languages and Linguistics of Atiner, 7-10 July 2025, Athens, Greece: (1) “Pragmatic dimensions of aspects in English: theory and practice”, by Shinian Wu, USA; (2) “The phenomenon of speaker ghosting and the cancellability feature of the Turkish *-miş* forms”, by Sema Kutsarova, Bulgaria; (3) “The Greek present perfect as an exponent of cancellability”, by Desislava Dimitrova, Bulgaria. In contrast to languages such as Chinese without grammaticalized tense systems, other languages, like for example Bulgarian, feature extremely complex TAM systems. The two papers focused on Turkish – Kutsarova’s, and Greek –

---

\*Co-Editor of the Athens Journal of Philology.

Dimitrova's, respectively, also deal with TAM features of Bulgarian. The present paper, "Tense, aspect, modality issues in and across languages: with special emphasis on the perfect", by Krasimir Kabakčiev, offers a recapitulation of the two TAM Special Sessions held in 2024 and 2025 in Athens and an overview of the other three papers from the standpoint of current linguistic theory.

### **The Two TAM Special Sessions in 2024 and 2025 in Athens**

In July 2024 and July 2025, Special Sessions "TAM In and Across Languages" were organized within Atiner's Annual International Conference on Languages and Linguistics; six presentations were made during the Special Session in July 2024, three during the Special Session in July 2025. Four of the presentations in July 2024 were submitted to AJP and published: "Pragmatics of TAM: its descriptive and observational adequacy", by Shinian Wu, USA (AJP 11-3, 2024); "The category of determiner in Albanian", by Hysnie Haxhillari, Albania (AJP 11-4, 2024); "On the gigantic fallacy that there is no Slavic-like aspect in the Romance languages and aspect resides only in the past domain", by Krasimir Kabakčiev, Greece (AJP 12-1, 2025); "An attempt at outlining the major features of compositional aspect in Modern Turkish", by Sema Kutsarova, Bulgaria (AJP 12-1, 2025). The three presentations delivered in July 2025 are published now, in this issue, and are discussed below.

### **An Article on the Pragmatic Aspects of English Aspect**

From an aspectological point of view, languages around the world are of two major types: verbal-aspect languages: here belong the Slavic languages, Greek, Georgian, Chinese (among many other) and compositional-aspect languages, major European representatives of which are the Germanic and the Romance languages, Albanian, Finnish (Kabakčiev 2000, 2025). In verbal-aspect languages the major aspectual distinction between perfectivity and imperfectivity is realized in verbs as lexical items, whereby every verb (almost) is perfective or imperfective as a lexical entry and the distinction is grammaticalized.<sup>1</sup> In compositional-aspect languages, the perfective-imperfective distinction is realized in the form of an extremely complex interplay at the level of the sentence mainly between NPs as situation participants (also known as verb arguments) and the verb (Kabakčiev 2000: Chapter 6), according to two aspectual schemata: a perfective and an imperfective one, architected and explained by the finder of compositional aspect Henk Verkuyl (1993, 2022). But the rules of Verkuyl's two aspectual schemata, despite being rigorous and clear (for linguists with good knowledge of

---

<sup>1</sup>In Chinese, the situation is somewhat more specific: verbs as lexical items are unmarked for perfectivity-imperfectivity but there is a special particle *-le* systematically used for perfectivization. Also, in verbal-aspect languages (Slavic, Greek, Georgian) there are verbs that are biaspectual, aspectually ambivalent, and these fall out of the large bulk of verbs that are either perfective or imperfective.

compositional aspect), are sometimes incapable of providing the correct aspectual reading of a given sentence. These cases are usually due to the so-called pragmatic component of language, different from the semantic and grammatical components, which sometimes interferes with the compositional rules for interpreting the meanings of sentences.

Two examples will be given here to exemplify the clash that sometimes occurs between the rules of compositional aspect explication in English and the pragmatic component interfering with the correct reading of sentences. The clash may be due to different pragmatic factors, including the influence of contexts, but is especially frequently based on people's knowledge of the world, which is a complex structure. Consider these two examples:<sup>2</sup>

- (1) a. My mother was a tailor / She sewed my new blue jeans  
b. Things have changed

A sentence such as the second one in the sequence (1a), *She [My mother] sewed my blue jeans*, is interpreted through the rules of compositional explication as denoting a one-off act of a mother repairing a single new pair of jeans – which means perfective in grammatical terms. However, in (1a) the second sentence, *She sewed my new blue jeans*, actually refers *not* to a one-off act but to a sequence of acts of repairing jeans one after another – non-bounded in time, without a known beginning and a known end. This second interpretation of the meaning of the sentence, different from the standard one, is due to the impact of the first sentence in the sequence, *My mother was a tailor*, which guides the listener to understand that the second sentence, *She sewed my new blue jeans*, has a specific meaning, covering a habitual activity by the mother. This impact on the aspectual interpretation is pragmatic; it is often a result of the fundamental knowledge of people about how the world is built and functions – and guides them through the meanings of sentences. The pragmatic impact, as can be seen here, may conflict with the normal interpretation of language expressions, sentences and sometimes even whole texts.

The second example, *Things have changed*, also demonstrates a deviation from the rules of compositional explication of aspect in English. It ought to refer to a continuous, non-bounded, ever-lasting change of the status quo in the past leading to the present and ought to be interpreted as imperfective. However, it obviously has a different meaning in this case, describing a one-off and final change of the status quo, firmly established at the present moment. This sentence is assigned perfectivity in conflict with the grammatically non-bounded subject-NP, represented by a bare plural, which standardly triggers imperfectivity. Compare *Children arrived*, an imperfective sentence, vs *The children arrived*, the latter with a bounded subject-NP (through the definite article), hence the latter is a perfective sentence. Phrased otherwise, *Things have changed* ought to be an imperfective sentence just like *Children arrived*. And if it must be perfective according to the formal compositional rules, it ought to be structured in the following way: *The things have changed* – just like *The children arrived*. But it isn't.

In his major works, including his three monographs, Verkuyl (1972, 1993, 2022) did not pay special attention to the pragmatic factors underlying in many

---

<sup>2</sup>The examples are from two popular songs, *The House of the Rising Sun*, a traditional folk song performed by The Animals, and *Things Have Changed*, written and performed by Bob Dylan.

cases the aspectual interpretation of sentences in English (as in the examples above) – or in similar languages such as Dutch, his mother tongue. Of course, having made the epochal discovery of compositional aspect, its finder cannot be expected to have also solved all the issues troubling the correct conceptualization of the extremely complex phenomenon of aspect. And here comes Wu's (2026) paper dealing with the issue, explaining pragmatic factors underlying aspectual interpretation and exemplifying them using sentences such as (2) in Mandarin Chinese.

As explained by Wu, *-le* is a perfective particle in Mandarin Chinese that marks completion of an action in a sentence such as (2a). But its interpretation here conflicts with the compositional aspect rules:

- (2) a. Ta chi-**le** na jikuai binggan, keshi mei  
 chi wan  
*She eat-le those several cookies, but didn't eat  
 finish*  
 'She ate those cookies, but didn't finish eating them'
- b. Tya yade tezi nyakolko biskvitki, no ne gi izjade dokray  
 'She ate those cookies, but didn't finish eating them'

Sentence (2a) is a good example for prompting serious reasoning in cross-language terms. In English, the translation *She ate those cookies, but didn't finish eating them* of the Mandarin Chinese sentence sounds somewhat strange – because English *ate those cookies* is perfective according to the compositional rules but the subsequent phrase *didn't finish eating them* cancels the perfectivity of *ate those cookies* and modifies the previous phrase into what was described long ago (Kabakčiev 2000: 279–307) as an episode Vendlerian situation (after Vendler 1957). An episode itself is what matches the description of the semantics of the Bulgarian grammatical entity known as the imperfective Aorist. As for the Bulgarian sentence (2b), it is a translation of the English translation of the Mandarin sentence (2a), and, by necessity, it contains an imperfective Aorist, *yade* 'ate [for some time]', its grammatical meaning covered by the episode situation.

Slavic linguists have been wondering for decades, and even more, what kind of grammeme the Bulgarian imperfective Aorist is, especially because it is absent in the other Slavic languages. An answer provided by Dimitrova & Kabakčiev (2021) is that the imperfective Aorist is a residual phenomenon of the necessity imposed on the Bulgarian language to develop an Imperfect verb form. The Imperfect form serves to eliminate the temporal boundedness of subject- and object-NP referents (Kabakčiev 2000: 279–308), leaving the Aorist with the role of "an odd man out". After the Imperfect emerged – unfortunately linguistic science cannot tell us when this happened in the history of the language – the remaining member of the Aorist-Imperfect opposition, the Aorist, could not obtain a standard imperfective value, as this value was already occupied by the Imperfect. Therefore, the Aorist, which is a term originating in Ancient Greek grammar and has a perfective value, was forced to develop an additional value in Bulgarian: not perfective but quasi-perfective. Formally, morphologically, it had to be an imperfective Aorist. The imperfective Aorist encodes a fifth Vendlerian class called

episode (Kabakčiev 2000: 279–308), see it analysed further in Dimitrova & Kabakčiev (2021: 200–202). Vendler's (1957) well-known original situation classes are four: states, activities, accomplishment and achievements. To these four, the episode is added as an additional class.

The episode may seem strange and even superfluous from the point of view of general Slavic grammar – because it is nowhere else to be found in the world of Slavic languages.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it is absent in both Ancient and Modern Greek grammar – where Aorists are formed from perfective verbs only and imperfects from imperfective verbs only (Dimitrova 2021). But, as can be seen here, the episode actually fills a particular slot in the theoretically or practically possible classes of Vendlerian situations. It is a value which is temporally bounded yet it is not perfective but quasi-perfective. This is a situation with a definite beginning and a definite end of the situation on the time axis but with no telos achieved, whereas perfectivity is a bounded situation with a telos achieved – as a general rule, in almost all cases. Episodes in English perfectly cover the use of atelic verbs with *for*-time adverbials, semantically equalling Bulgarian imperfective Aorists. Wu's example (2a) shows that these Vendlerian situations are found in Mandarin Chinese too, but more research is probably needed for their better description.

The two sentences (2a) and (2b) above demonstrate how a certain phenomenon that appears bizarre in some languages – sometimes forcing linguists to either ignore it or stow it away into pragmatics (as if pragmatics were a wastepaper basket), may surface as a fully-fledged grammatical entity in another language (other languages). The episode identified in Wu's example (2a) is a fully grammaticalized Bulgarian morphological entity: an imperfective Aorist. Below, on material from the other two papers in this issue, it will, first, be shown how aspectual meanings may change beyond the domain of compositional aspect rules and, second, how two semantic values, witnessing and non-witnessing, that could also be thought to be pragmatic, turn out to have emerged in certain languages as grammatical.

### **Two Articles about the Perfect in Turkish and Greek against Bulgarian and Partly English Data to Further Debunk the Myth that the Perfect is a Mystery**

Two articles in this special issue of AJP deal with the so-called cancellability feature – among some other features, of the Greek Perfect and of the Turkish Perfect-like *-miş* verb forms, authored by Kutsarova and Dimitrova, respectively. These papers are notable in that they use Bulgarian, a language with a uniquely complex TAM system, for an identical point of departure for the analysis of both Turkish and Greek. English is also employed as a metalanguage – which adds up to four important languages from the point of view of general linguistic theory. The two papers by Kutsarova and Dimitrova open new vistas in the cross-language study of Perfects in and across languages by explaining that the Perfect in both Turkish and Greek exists for a reason or, rather, reasons – albeit in two formally different instantiations.

---

<sup>3</sup>With certain peripheral exceptions in some Balkan languages: Serbian, Montenegrin.

***The Perfect is not a mystery anymore!*** It serves some important structural functions, described initially on data from Bulgarian and English (Kabakčiev 2017; 2018; 2020; 2022b). Firstly, the Bulgarian Perfect eliminates the so-called speaker ghosting effect by grammaticalizing sentences in the ‘*X said that* [content of *that*]’ semantico-syntactic schema, see below. Secondly, it serves as an exponent of non-witnessing and cancellability. Below are the two examples (3a) and (3b) that were used for the first time in the literature to demonstrate the non-grammaticality of these Bulgarian sentences and to explain the reasons for it. The non-grammaticality had been known for quite some time in Bulgarian linguistics but had received no explanation.<sup>4</sup> In order to become grammatical, Bulgarian sentences such as (3a) and (3b) must be restructured using Perfect verb forms (and some other, not discussed here), cf. (4a), (4b):

- (3) a. \*Petar kaza<sub>AOR</sub>, che pristigna<sub>AOR</sub>  
 ‘Peter said that he arrived’  
 ‘Peter said that he arrived’
- b. \*Petar kaza<sub>AOR</sub>, che Maria pristigna<sub>AOR</sub>  
 ‘Peter said that Maria arrived’  
 ‘Peter said that Maria arrived’
- (4) a. Petar kaza<sub>AOR</sub>, che e pristigna<sub>PERFECT</sub>  
 ‘Peter said that he has arrived’  
 (literally) ‘Peter said that he has arrived’
- b. Petar kaza<sub>AOR</sub>, che Maria e pristigna<sub>PERFECT</sub>  
 ‘Peter said that Maria has arrived’  
 (literally) ‘Peter said that Maria has arrived’

Soon after the speaker ghosting phenomenon was discovered in Bulgarian, see its initial explanation in Kabakčiev (2018), it was also found and described on Montenegrin data – by Bulatović (2018), using non-grammatical examples similar to the Bulgarian ones above.<sup>5</sup>

The major thesis launched in Kabakčiev (2017; 2018; 2020; 2022b) – mainly on Bulgarian and English data, and adhered to by Kutsarova and Dimitrova in their papers in this issue, is that, actually:

***the Bulgarian Perfect has no semantics of its own.***

It exercises *structural* functions, and the traditional meanings usually ascribed to it – such as current relevance and resultativity, are a consequence of the natural necessity in linguistic analyses to have a semantic meaning characterizing a grammeme, provided the grammeme is not purely structural. The latter is the case with gender, articles, cases and some similar ones: these are more or less purely structural grammemes.

Suppose the Perfect were a cross-language or universal grammeme that had a clear and easily identifiable semantic meaning of its own. It would have been

<sup>4</sup>The reason for this is that the explanation is extremely difficult, as shown in Kabakčiev (2018).

<sup>5</sup>Bulgarian and Montenegrin are mutually understandable languages – to a moderate degree.

triggered in the development of the relevant language(s) by some necessity for native speakers of these languages to effectuate a notion important for human communication. Notions important for human communication are, for example (among others), time, aspect, number. Being important, they are realized in the structure of language through the grammatical categories tense, aspect and number. A serious question that arises is: what is the notion of the Perfect that is important for human communication? The answer is that the Perfect *simply does not manifest* any such notion. Nevertheless, the refutation of this idea in favor of searching for some specific semantic meaning(s) of the Perfect is being laboriously and systematically carried out to the present day, as in two recent publications: Yao (2024), Kaplan (2025), discussed below.

A long time ago Dahl (1985), Comrie (1985) and Bybee et al. (1994), among others, showed convincingly that many languages around the world feature Perfect verb forms, yet equally many other do not. But these and other similar publications never ventured an explanation why so many languages need to have Perfect verb forms, yet so many other languages function freely without them. They never even asked a question why the Perfect has such features among languages: either present or absent, and when it appears to be present as in some languages like German, Serbian, Montenegrin, etc., it actually functions not as a Perfect but as a preterit. The fact is that innumerable languages around the world have no Perfect verb forms at all but their speakers nonetheless *understand each other perfectly* and do not feel deprived. This fact has only recently (Kabakčiev 2020: 143) been accentuated and analysed at length.

### A General Description of the Wrong Conceptualization of the Perfect

The Perfect is unquestionably a major grammatical entity, usually frequent in actual speech in the relevant language, i.e., in the language that features it. It is widely found across languages and is well-known to the global community of linguists. But despite these straightforward characteristics, it has *never* received a convincing treatment, and for this reason it is frequently labelled a “puzzle”, “riddle” or “mystery” (Klein 1992; Pancheva & von Stechow 2004; Higginbotham 2009: 160; Kabakčiev 2020: 127). Four decades ago, some truly devastating criticism was leveled at the failure of the linguistic community to explain the Perfect:

*The descriptive accounts of the perfect are vague, they make unprincipled distinctions between different uses of the perfect, without explaining why the perfect should fulfil such an arbitrary looking collection of functions* (Moens 1987: 94).

As argued by Kutsarova in the present edition, this criticism is still fully valid today. It has never ever been proved wrong. The truth is that many researchers studying the Perfect today agree that it effectively resists attempts to be assigned a semantic value that would be discoverable in all of its uses, or at least in most of them. One cannot but fully agree with Östen Dahl, who recently wrote:

*treatments of perfects often start out with the English perfect [...] but too often English is not only the point of departure of the discussion but also its end. To find the proper place for perfects, we have to go beyond English to be able to separate what is idiosyncratic from what is generalizable (Dahl 2022: 280).*

The present paper, summarizing research on the Perfect, will show that the two publications by Kutsarova and Dimitrova here not only corroborate Dahl's insistence that we "have to go beyond English". The two authors actually do precisely this: by first going to Bulgarian data with its extremely intriguing speaker ghosting effect and then to Turkish and Greek data, respectively, whereby the Turkish data turns out to exactly replicate the regularities discovered in Bulgarian. Meanwhile the authors analyse also English to elucidate the essence of the Perfect there and its true *raison d'être* – not its "semantics", thus following Kabakčiev's (2020: 143) leading thesis to which Kutsarova and Dimitrova subscribe: *the Perfect does not have own semantics*.

### Further Notes on the Inadequate Understanding of the Perfect Prevailing in Linguistic Writings

Contrary to the thesis that the Perfect does not possess any semantics of its own, the assertion generally maintained in linguistic circles today is different, and it is that the Perfect manifests "resultativity" – or another similar value, discussed below. However, it is crystal-clear that this assertion can be valid *only and solely* when perfective verbs are used in a sentence – in verbal-aspect languages, or in perfective expressions in compositional-aspect languages – phrases, clauses, sentences.

Consider the English sentence (5a) below, perfective in compositional aspect terms. It can, indeed, be described as "resultative". But why? Is it because it contains a perfect verb form? No. It is because it contains an underlying perfective sentence *The bear entered this park* encoding a bounded situation with a telos achieved. The telos consists in that the bear is in the park after having been outside but with an intention to enter. This meaning arises according to the rules of compositional aspect, and not because the Perfect form itself *has entered* is "resultative". This Perfect verb form *is not and cannot be "resultative"* – for a reason that is perfectly clear: it can take part in innumerable other expressions and sentences that are *not perfective* but imperfective. Consider again sentence (5a), this time against the English sentences (5b) and (5c) below: (5a) is a perfective sentence and its perfectivity is compositionally realized. Conversely, the two sentences (5b), (5c) are imperfective and their imperfectivity is again compositionally realized, even though they contain exactly the same Perfect verb form – consisting of an auxiliary *have* plus a participle *entered*:

- (5) a. The bear has entered this park  
 b. Bears have entered this park  
 c. Bears have entered parks  
 d. Mechkata e vlyazla v tozi park  
 'The bear has entered this park'

Compare now Bulgarian (5d). It is a perfective sentence which semantically perfectly matches English (5a) and carries a resultative value. But what is this resultative value due to? Is it due to the Perfect verb form *e vlyazla* ‘has entered’? No. Not at all. It is **solely and only** due to the perfectivity of the verb *vlyaza* ‘to enter’. The widespread and heavily prevailing explanation by Bulgarianists that sentences such as (5d) are perfective and hence resultative because periphrastic Perfect verb forms such as *e vlyazla* ‘has entered’ trigger resultativity is mind-boggling in its extreme inadequacy. The Perfect verb form *e vlyazla* ‘has entered’ is resultative **not because it is a Perfect verb form** but because the initial underlying expression (sentence) *Mechkata vlezhe* ‘The bear entered’ is perfective, the perfectivity arising from the perfectivity of the verb *vlyaza* ‘to enter’.

There is another reason why the widely prevailing explanation of sentence (5d) is inadequate. If sentence (5d) were resultative because of the resultativity of the verb form *e vlyazla* ‘has entered’, this would mean that the resultativity of the perfective verb *vlyaza* ‘to enter’ must be, so to say, erased first, and then the resultativity of the verb form *e vlyazla* ‘has entered’ is to be superimposed onto a, so to say, “de-perfectivized” expression *e vlyazla* ‘has entered’. And, finally, the latter becomes resultative because the Perfect is, allegedly, resultative. To assume that such a complex and bizarre procedure takes place in the human brain and in language in general (language being a product of the human brain) would be sheer absurdity.

The grossly infelicitous assertion that the Perfect has “resultative semantics” is also easily reduced to pieces by analyses of huge numbers of other sentences in many languages featuring Perfect forms and containing participles encoding Vendlerian states or activities – which are inherently non-bounded, hence non-resultative. Sentences of this kind are Bulgarian (6a) and English (6b) below. Contained in (6a) are Perfect verb forms obtained from past participles that are ambivalent, i.e., unmarked for Aorist or Imperfect. However, they obviously effectuate states or activities, which means non-boundedness – carried by the lexical semantics of the participles. Note that Vendlerian states and activities are primarily effectuated by Perfect verb forms obtained from Imperfect participles (abbreviated PERFECT-IMPFV-PART), as in (6c) and (6d):

- (6) a. Sasedat vinagi e obichal/haresval/predpochital/obozhaval bira  
‘The neighbor has always loved/liked/preferred/adored beer’  
b. The neighbor has always loved/liked/preferred/adored beer  
c. Drevnite gartsi sa se biel<sup>PERFECT-IMPFV-PART</sup> vav falangova formatsiya  
(literally) The Ancient Greeks have fought in a phalanx formation  
‘Ancient Greeks fought in a phalanx formation’  
d. Protestirashtite sa noseli<sup>PERFECT-IMPFV-PART</sup> plakati protiv voynata  
(literally) The protesters have carried slogans against the war  
‘Protesters carried slogans against the war’

In Bulgarian (6a), the imperfective verb *obicham* ‘to love’, encoding a Vendlerian state, is used in the form of a participle (along with the other verbs): *obichal* ‘loved’, unmarked for Aorist or Imperfect. Does it or any of the other verbs in (6a) generate “resultativeness”? Not at all. Not in the least. And does the Vendlerian

state in the English phrases *love beer* and *drink beer* generate “resultativeness”? Not at all. Not in the least. From the very first moment the speaker tasted beer to the very present moment, right now, the speaker loved (preferred, etc.) the foamy drink equally strongly and drank it – in all the relevant moments in the past, during the whole period referred to. There is ***no trace whatsoever*** at the present moment of some “result” of the speaker’s love, preference etc. for beer or of his habit of drinking beer. This is valid for the Bulgarian sentence(s) in (6a) as well as for the English sentence(s) and provides super solid proof for the thesis that ***“resultativeness” cannot be “a meaning”*** – whether central or peripheral – of the Perfect verb form.

The examples (6), which structurally and semantically replicate innumerable other similar English and Bulgarian sentences, demonstrate in a crystal-clear manner the sweeping and absolutely correct generalization that the “semantics” of the Perfect ***can by no means*** depend on grammatical and/or semantic characteristics of particular types of verbs, verb phrases, clauses or sentences accompanying a Perfect verb form. If a grammeme such as the Perfect, or any other for that matter, must have “semantics” in order to fulfil the requirements of grammars or other grammatical descriptions, or of grammarians, ***this semantics must be its own***. It cannot be derivable from the semantics or the grammatical features of the auxiliary or of the main verb in the form of a participle – or from the meaning of some phrases or of the sentence as a whole. This is an obvious truth that the investigators of the Perfect failed to grasp in the course of decades, and the reason for their failure is that they never took the pains to learn what exactly compositional aspect is. See an analysis of the incessant worldwide misconceptualization of compositional aspect in Kabakčiev (2025).

The other major wrong assertion about the Perfect, similar to the previous one, is that it manifests “current relevance” as its “meaning”. This one again completely ***fails to hold water***. In sentences such as (6a) and (6b) above, what is the “current relevance” of the circumstance that the speaker loved (or preferred etc.) or drank beer in the past? Is there any trace whatsoever of “current relevance”? No. A sentence such as (6a) refers to a period from an unknown point in the past to the present moment, and there is neither some “consequence”, nor some “relevance” for the present moment. Indeed, there are sentences with Perfect verb forms that imply relevance for the present moment; (5a) and (5b) above are such sentences. But, again, the “current relevance” here is a result of the semantics of the sentence as a whole, and there is no “current relevance” triggered by some “semantics” of the Perfect verb form itself. Bottom line:

***the Perfect does not possess any “semantics” of its own!***

It exercises structural functions and what is persistently claimed by some researchers to be the “semantics of the Perfect” is actually some phenomena related to the semantics of words and phrases in the sentence or in the sentence as a whole, or of grammatical meanings of certain expressions – and not of the Perfect verb form itself.

### Notes on “The State of the Art”: Two Most Recent Studies on the Perfect

Today there are authors of grammatical writings who, unlike the researchers who defined the perfect as “a puzzle”, “a riddle” or “a mystery”, do not regard the Perfect as mysterious. Two brand-new publications describe the Perfect as having a standard meaning – or meanings. The first one is a book, on English data mainly (Yao 2024) – though otherwise it views the Perfect as a phenomenon with a large cross-language presence. The second one is an article (Kapkan 2025) which purports to describe the Perfect in Lithuanian and Bulgarian. These two publications continue a tradition of viewing the Perfect as an expedient of some “standard semantic meaning” (or meanings), contrary to the theses in the present paper and in the two articles on the Perfect in this issue. In other words, there continues to exist a tradition in linguistics worldwide of fruitless exploration of a thesis that sidesteps the criticism raised by researchers such as Moens and others for whom the Perfect is a puzzle, riddle and mystery. This tradition reflects the inability of many linguists to explain the Perfect. It is worth noting that the researchers who interpret the Perfect as a conglomeration of meanings do not pay *any* attention whatsoever to the argumentation of the other researchers, who view the Perfect as a conundrum.

Yao’s (2024) book attempts to describe what the author calls the “various meanings of the Perfect”, mostly on English data and in as many ways as possible, following the understanding of the author. “Classes of meanings” of the Perfect, scrupulously detailed, are built and re-built; lengthy reasoning on the “semantics of the Perfect” is performed; elaborate statistical methods are figured out and devotedly employed (Yao 2024: Chapter 8). The underlying conviction here is that the validity of a particular meaning of a particular grammeme in a language necessarily depends on its prevalence in real-world use.

In a similar approach, Kapkan (2025) insists that the essence of the Perfect is represented by a “full spectrum of semantic functions”. This paper, that ought to be dealing on an equal footing with the Perfect in two languages, Lithuanian and Bulgarian – related but not very closely, manifests insufficient knowledge of the Bulgarianist linguistic literature and, as a result, of the extremely and notoriously complex grammatical structure of the Bulgarian verb. With minor exceptions, the Bulgarian bibliography is from the previous century, whereby certain theses in the sources are incorrect in their interpretations of the Perfect. The major one concerns a drastically wrong assertion by many Bulgarianists – who even form a majority, that Perfects in Bulgarian are not obtained from Imperfect participles (see, chronologically, Andrejczin 1944; Andrejczin et al. 1977; Maslov 1982; Bulgarian Academy grammar 1983; Georgiev 1991; Marovska 2005; Kutsarov 2007; Nitsolova 2008; Pashov 2013 – inter alia). Note that another group of Bulgarianists, smaller, maintains precisely the opposite: Bulgarian perfects *are* formed from Imperfect participles (again chronologically, see Mladenov 1927; Kostov 1939; Popov 1941; Lindstedt 1985; Penchev 1987; Rå Hauge 1999; Todorova 2010; Kabakčiev 2022a). The latter group listed here represents – in all probability – “all the dissidents”.

It becomes imperative therefore, to check out the author's position on how exactly the Bulgarian Perfect is formed. Kapkan (2025: 1) states that it is obtained from “the present tense form of the verb meaning ‘to be’ – functioning as an auxiliary [...] and a past active participle of a lexical verb”. This means that the author does not know that Bulgarian **does not have a single past active participle**, unlike all the other Slavic languages. It features **two participles** – and they differ radically, not only semantically but also overtly, formally, morphologically, in a consistent and fully systematic way: Aorist participles, Imperfect participles.

It is a serious failure if a linguist cannot explain how the Bulgarian Perfect is obtained, given that participles are the major formation device for the Perfect.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, this means that this researcher has a wrong idea of what a Bulgarian Perfect is, starting from the very basic point of view, of its formation. Whether the Bulgarian Perfect is obtained from Aorist participles only or also from Imperfect participles, makes **a world of difference** in its general features and semantico-syntactic behavior. In the former case, if obtained from Aorist participles only, the Bulgarian Perfect would be heavily restricted and capable of effectuating only accomplishments, achievements and episodes. In the latter case, with Imperfect participles, the Bulgarian Perfect is already capable of effectuating Vendlerian states and activities – which means **all Vendlerian situations, with no restrictions**.

It is worth emphasizing that, in cases when linguists think that Bulgarian Imperfect participles are not used to form perfects, they unquestionably oblige themselves to explain **why** Imperfect participles are not used to form perfects. But the fact – whether it must be regarded as disastrous or ridiculous – is that the Bulgarian grammars listed above do not at all explain **why** Imperfect participles do not form perfects. **They offer no argumentation** for this based on a semantic analysis of the use of Aorist vs Imperfect participles in Perfect verb forms (see the issue in Kabakčiev 2017: 307–310; 2022a, 2024). Finally, given that there is such a drastically wrong tradition in the majority of Bulgarian grammars and linguistic writings maintaining that Imperfect participles do not form perfects (it occurred also for historical and political reasons, see Kabakčiev 2024), this does not mean that a researcher today is free to sidestep the problem due to ignorance of its existence.

Kapkan's paper also misses – or has purposefully ignored – the circumstance that within a decade already the Bulgarian Perfect, claimed by the author to be “semantically analysed”, has received an interpretation (Kabakčiev 2017; 2018; 2020; 2022b) that is radically different from publications finding some “universal” or “near-universal” meaning(s) of the Perfect.

The idea that some “meaning” of the Perfect can be found across languages, was recently analysed and subjected to doubt also by Dahl (2022). But, whatever the analyses of the Perfect in certain publications, the two papers in this issue by Kutsarova and Dimitrova propose such an interpretation of the Perfect in Bulgarian in which it is defined as lacking own semantics, on the one hand. And, on the other, its existence is explained, following Kabakčiev (2018, 2020, 2022b), as due to the necessity to serve three extremely significant structural language functions: (i) elimination of the speaker ghosting effect; (ii) provision of a

---

<sup>6</sup>If statistics is employed, it will show that Imperfect participles constitute an enormous lexical (lexico-grammatical) class.

grammatical verb form encoding non-witnessing and cancellability; (iii) grammaticalization of certain types of sentences, particularly in the ‘*X said that* [content of *that*]’ schema and in some similar semantico-syntactic schemata. Apart from Bulgarian, these three functions are also valid for Turkish, as shown in Kutsarova’s paper in this issue, see the following section.

### Notes on the “Perfect Issue” on Turkish Data: Cancellability, Witnessing vs Non-witnessing, Speaker ghosting, Grammaticalization of Certain Types of Sentences

The cancellability feature of the Perfect in Bulgarian and some other languages, including English, was revealed and discussed extensively some years ago (Kabakčiev 2018, 2020, 2022b). Soon after its discovery in Bulgarian – along with speaker ghosting, it was also found on Montenegrin data, by Bulatović (2018). In this issue of AJP, Dimitrova for Bulgarian and Kutsarova for both Bulgarian and Turkish confirm that the Perfect must unreservedly be regarded as a device for eliminating speaker ghosting, for grammaticalizing certain types of sentences and for effectuating cancellability; by “Perfect” in Turkish, the *-miş* verb forms are meant. In both Turkish and Bulgarian, the relevant devices are grammaticalized. As for the features cancellability and non-witnessing of the Perfect, they are valid for Greek and English too. But in these two languages, and hence, obviously, in many other, they are *not grammaticalized*.

In her analysis of Turkish, a language she is a native speaker of – not only a specialist in, Kutsarova (2026) does not simply argue, she *definitively proves* that the verb forms of the *-miş* type, widely recognized in Turkology as corresponding to Perfect verb forms in European languages, are devices serving the need for grammaticalization of certain types of sentences exactly in the same way as described for Bulgarian in Kabakčiev (2018: 229–232) and in Dimitrova’s paper here. Kutsarova explains that in Turkish the situation in (7a) below is represented through the *-DI* verb form, *temizledi* ‘cleaned’, as *witnessed* by the speaker. Conversely, in (7b) it is represented through the *-miş* form *temizlemiş* ‘has cleaned’ as *not witnessed* by the speaker:

- (7) a. Berna odasını temizledi [grammatically witnessed]  
       ‘Berna cleaned her room’  
       b. Berna odasını temizlemiş [grammatically non-witnessed]  
       ‘Berna has cleaned her room’

This assertion is, of course, not new and is present in most Turkish grammars. But, given that the regularity turns out to be identical in Turkish and Bulgarian, the following can be argued in favor of the existence of a cross-language interdependence. If a certain isolated language manifests a grammatical feature of this kind, it might perhaps be regarded as accidental. But if two genealogically different languages share the same grammatical and semantic feature and the same structural regularity, as in this case Bulgarian and Turkish, such a circumstance cannot be waived as theoretically insignificant or as occurring at random in the two

languages separately. Common sense suggests that the emergence of the two types of verb forms, the *-DI* type and the *-mİş* type, is nothing else but a product of the human brain – language, which generates certain grammatical entities that are sometimes very specific (and even rare and exotic, as in this case) for providing the necessary correct balance in the overall grammatical structure of a language.

Now the discussion of the Turkish witnessed *-DI* verb forms vis-à-vis the non-witnessed *-mİş* verb forms is to continue with the intriguing regularity termed speaker ghosting (Kabakčiev 2018) and revealed by Kutsarova as existing also in Turkish after its discovery in Bulgarian and later in Montenegrin. Obviously, Turkish sentences of type (7), realizing grammatically the contrast between witnessing and non-witnessing, are innumerable. This, in turn, explains why sentences such as (8a) and (8b) below, again constructed by Kutsarova, are important in terms of the structural regularities and specificities of Turkish. The regularities replicate those in Bulgarian described in Kabakčiev (2018: 229–232) as manifestations of the phenomenon of speaker ghosting – eliminated in the ‘*X said that* [content of *that*]’ schema through the use of Perfect verb forms. The elimination of non-grammaticality is illustrated here by the sentences (8c) and (8d) – Bulgarian translation equivalents of Turkish (8a) and (8b):

- (8) a. \*Annem söyledi ki kardeşimi bir inek tekmeledi  
‘My mother said that a cow kicked my brother’  
b. Annem söyledi ki kardeşimi inek tekmelemiş  
(literally) ‘My mother said that a cow has kicked my brother’  
c. \*Mayka mi kaza<sub>AOR</sub>, che krava ritna<sub>AOR</sub> brat mi  
‘My mother said that a cow kicked my brother’  
d. Mayka mi kaza<sub>AOR</sub>, che krava e ritnal<sub>PERFECT</sub> brat mi  
(literally) ‘My mother said that a cow has kicked my brother’.

The non-grammatical versions of the sentences – in both Turkish and Bulgarian, manifest the speaker ghosting phenomenon. It consists in the presence of two speakers in a single sentence. These two speakers make two contradictory assertions, described in detail in Kabakčiev (2018). In (8a), the first speaker, producing the phrase *annem söyledi* ‘my mother said’, is contradicted by the second speaker, who produces the phrase *kardeşimi bir inek tekmeledi* ‘a cow kicked my brother’. The contradiction consists in the following. When someone reports somebody’s (a speaker’s) assertion, as in the case of *annem söyledi* ‘my mother said’, this assertion is **either true or untrue** by its very nature. But in (6a) a second speaker appears, who asserts in the dependent clause that s/he personally witnessed that a cow kicked his/her brother – using the witnessed form *tekmeledi* ‘kicked’. The second assertion compromises the requirement that what the mother said must be understood as either true or untrue. Hence, sentence (7a) incorporates not one speaker, but two speakers who, furthermore, contradict each other. One of these speakers is a ghost speaker, i.e., a fake, false speaker, and a sentence containing two speakers contradicting each other is perceived by the native speaker of the language as non-grammatical.<sup>7</sup> Kutsarova’s

<sup>7</sup>But the intriguing thing here is that while native speakers immediately recognize the non-grammaticality of such sentences, they are at the same time totally unable to explain what the non-grammaticality is due to.

discovery of the speaker ghosting phenomenon in Turkish and of the cancellability of the *-mİş* forms represents a finding that ought to be – sooner or later – recorded in Turkish grammars.

### Notes on Witnessing and Non-witnessing in Greek

In her article in this volume, Dimitrova – native speaker of Greek and Bulgarian and specialist in both languages, analyses Greek data to reach conclusions that confirm the conjecture in Kabakčiev (2022b: 395): Greek probably belongs to those languages in which the Perfect is employed in such a way that it is non-witnessed and hence cancelable, although in these languages the non-witnessed value is only signalled, and not by default.<sup>8</sup> Non-witnessing of the Perfect in Greek and in English, although not grammaticalized, is fixed and Perfect verb phrases cannot be read as witnessed, in contrast to languages like Montenegrin, Serbian, German, where this is not only possible but a standard interpretation. The speaker ghosting phenomenon observed in Bulgarian does not exist in Greek, as illustrated by Dimitrova’s sentences (9) below. The Bulgarian sentence (3b) above, equivalent to English *Peter said that Maria arrived*, is non-grammatical. But in Greek it is not, compare the structurally identical correct Greek sentence (9a) – because witnessing and non-witnessing in Greek are not grammaticalized, in contrast to Bulgarian and Turkish:

- (9) a. O Manólis éipe<sub>AOR</sub> óti i Eiríni égrapse<sub>AOR</sub> tin istoría  
 ‘Manolis said that Irini wrote the story’  
 b. O Manólis éipe<sub>AOR</sub> óti i Eiríni échei grápsei<sub>PERFECT</sub> tin istoría  
 (literally) ‘Manolis said that Irini has written the story’

What is explicated by default in Greek is the witnessed value in Aorist and Imperfect verb forms, as manifested in Dimitrova’s examples (10a) and (10b) below: isolated sentences in which the speaker is normally taken to have witnessed the situations. However, in (10c) and (10d), where these two verb forms – Aorist and Imperfect respectively, are placed in the second part of the ‘*X said that* [content of *that*]’ semantico-syntactic schema, what ensues is that they do not render the sentences non-grammatical – as this happens in Bulgarian and Turkish, but are perceived as non-witnessed. This happens because **the non-witnessed value is forced onto them** by the main clause in the ‘*X said that* [content of *that*]’ semantico-syntactic schema – as explained in Kabakčiev (2018) on Bulgarian data:

---

<sup>8</sup>When a grammatical value is signaled by default, this means that the relevant grammeme features it nominally but can lose it under the impact of neighboring sentences, the general context, etc. For example, English sentences such as (5c) above, *Bears have entered this park*, are imperfective by default due to the non-boundedness of the subject-NP triggering non-bounded iterativity: “bear after bear after bear”. However, this sentence may also refer to a one-off event – of a group of bears entering the park only once. This is a case of perfectivity and the so-called “silent some” – where *Bears have entered this park* actually means ‘Some bears have entered this park’ and not ‘Bear after bear after bear have entered this park’. Compare in the discussion of Shinian’s paper above the clash between compositional aspect rules and possible pragmatic interferences.

- (10) a. Oi kalesménoi éftasan<sub>AORIST</sub>  
 ‘The guests arrived’  
 b. Oi kalesménoi éftanan<sub>IMPERFECT</sub>  
 ‘The guests were arriving’  
 c. O X eípe<sub>AOR</sub> óti oi kalesménoi éftasan<sub>AOR</sub>  
 ‘X said that the guests arrived’  
 d. O X eípe<sub>AOR</sub> óti oi kalesménoi éftanan<sub>IMPERFECT</sub>  
 ‘X said that the guests were arriving’

With her examples (9) and (10) and their analyses, Dimitrova confirms the conjecture in Kabakčiev (2022b: 395) that Greek and English share these important features related to witnessing and non-witnessing and that Greek generally replicates English in the use of Perfect and preterit verb forms.

### Witnessing and Non-witnessing: A Summary

Witnessing and non-witnessing are semantic values of certain TAM verb forms. The phenomenon does not appear to be frequent across languages, at least among the well-described ones – but more research is certainly needed for the clarification of this issue. In the geographic region analysed in the two papers here, Eastern Europe, it is firmly established for Bulgarian and Turkish, languages in the Balkansprachbund. It seems to be also present in Georgian, a language in the nearby frontal area of Asia Minor. In the two papers here dealing with witnessing and non-witnessing, the contrast between the two types of forms is defined as grammaticalized in Bulgarian and Turkish and non-grammaticalized in Greek and other languages, including English. Non-witnessing in Turkish is manifested by *-miş* verb forms, witnessing by *-DI* verb forms. In Bulgarian, witnessing is represented by Aorist and Imperfect verb forms; non-witnessing, manifested predominantly by third person forms, is represented mainly by the Perfect and also by renarrative forms. It must be emphasized that the two contrasting types in Bulgarian and Turkish *exist simultaneously, in parallel to one another*: every witnessed form is counterposed to a non-witnessed one, and vice versa, every non-witnessed form is counterposed to a witnessed one. As already established, these two functions, witnessing and non-witnessing, hold for Bulgarian and Turkish but they are also valid for English (Kabakčiev 2020, 2022b). This is confirmed in the present issue for Greek by Dimitrova and for Turkish by Kutsarova, but in two different ways: witnessing and non-witnessing are grammaticalized in Bulgarian and Turkish, non-grammaticalized in Greek and English.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Some of the treatment of non-witnessing in Dimitrova’s paper remains as a task for future research. For example, her assertions that the Perfect is an exponent of cancellability “in some cases” only and that the Plusquamperfect is witnessed do not appear reasonable to me – but the analysis will require some time and effort.

## Conclusive Remarks

From the organizational point of view, the two TAM Special Sessions held within the two Annual International Conference on Languages and Linguistics of Atiner in 2024 and 2025 can be hailed as a success in that the presentations explored a specific linguistic topic, “TAM In and Across Languages” – which is as complex and difficult as it is intricate and thought-provoking. From the strictly scientific point of view, the two Special Sessions in 2024 and 2025 can also be considered a success. In 2024 there were two presentations dealing with aspect and tense in two very interesting languages, Portuguese and Arabic, but they, unfortunately, remained unpublished – because manuscripts for publication were not submitted by the authors. Two researchers took part in each of the two Special Sessions (July 2024 and July 2025): Shinian Wu and Sema Kutsarova, who produced four very interesting papers, already published in AJP. Another two researchers, Hysnie Haxhillari and Desislava Dimitrova, delivered presentations in 2024 and 2025, respectively, which turned into articles, also published: Haxhillari’s in AJP 11/4 (Haxhillari 2024), Dimitrova’s in the present volume.

The third “TAM In and Across Languages” Special Session is to be held within the 19th Annual International Conference on Languages & Linguistics, 6-10 July 2026, Athens – and the readers here are kindly asked to consider this announcement as a call for papers.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to: (i) the researchers who took part in the two Atiner Special TAM Sessions in July 2024 and July 2025 in Athens; (ii) the organizers of the events within the sessions; (iii) the colleagues responsible for this special issue of AJP; (iv) Gregory Papanikos, the President of Atiner, who launched the idea for thematic sessions to be held during Atiner’s annual linguistics conferences and who articulated full support for this special edition of AJP.

## References

- Andrejczin L (1944) *Osnovna balgarska gramatika* (Comprehensive Bulgarian grammar), Sofia: Hemus.
- Andrejczin L et al. (1977) Andrejczin L, Popov K, Stoyanov S. *Gramatika na balgarskiya ezik* (Grammar of Bulgarian). Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo.
- Bulatović V (2018) Negramatičnost aorista u izričnim rečenicama u crnogorskom (The non-grammaticality of the aorist in reporting dependent clauses in Montenegrin). *Lingua Montenegrina* XI/2, 22: 3–13.
- Bulgarian Academy grammar (1983) *Gramatika na savremenniya balgarski knizhoven ezik. Tom 2. Morfologiya* (A grammar of modern literary Bulgarian. Volume 2. Morphology). Sofia: BAN.

- Bybee et al. (1994) Bybee J, Perkins R, Pagliuca W. *The Evolution of Grammar. Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Comrie B (1985) *Tense*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Dahl Ö (1985) *Tense and Aspect Systems*. Oxford/New York: Blackwell.
- Dahl Ö (2022) Perfects across languages. *Annual Review of Linguistics* 8: 279–297.
- Dimitrova D (2021). Aspect coercion in Greek aorist and perfect verb forms. *Studies in Greek Linguistics* 41: 45–53.
- Dimitrova D (2026) The Greek present perfect as an exponent of cancellability. *Athens Journal of Philology* (in this issue).
- Dimitrova D & Kabakčiev K (2021). Compositional and verbal aspect in Greek: the aorist-imperfect distinction and the article-aspect interplay. *Athens Journal of Philology* 8(3): 181–206.
- Georgiev S (1991) *Balgarska morfologiya* (Bulgarian morphology). Veliko Tarnovo: Abagar.
- Haxhillari H (2024) The category of determiner in Albanian. *Athens Journal of Philology* 11(4): 327–338.
- Higginbotham J (2009) *Tense, Aspect, and Indexicality*. Oxford: OUP.
- Hristov B (2019) *Grammaticalising the Perfect and Explanations of Language Change: Have- and Be-perfects in the History and Structure of English and Bulgarian*. Leiden: Brill.
- Kabakčiev K (2000) *Aspect in English: a 'Common-Sense' View of the Interplay between Verbal and Nominal Referents*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Kabakčiev K (2017) *An English Grammar: Main Stumbling Blocks for Bulgarians Learning English*. Stuttgart: Mariana Kabakchiev Verlag.
- Kabakčiev K (2018) On non-grammaticality, “speaker ghosting”, and the raison d’être of English sequence of tenses (SOT). *Athens Journal of Philology* 5(3): 221–253.
- Kabakčiev K (2020) On the raison d’être of the present perfect, with special reference to the English grammeme. *Athens Journal of Philology* 7(2): 125–146.
- Kabakčiev K (2022a) Concerning imperfect participles in the formation of the Bulgarian present perfect and the non-witnessing of its third-person forms. *Proglas* 31(1): 32–41.
- Kabakčiev K (2022b) An attempt at unveiling the mystery of the present perfect – by analyzing it as a device to counterbalance the impact of other grammatical entities. Sougari A M and Bardzokas V (eds), *Selected Papers on Theoretical and Applied Linguistics from ISTAL24*. Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki: 384–401.
- Kabakčiev K (2024) Za edna veroyatno nesluchayna greshka i edna nespravedlivost sryamo balgarski lingvist ot nedalechnoto minalo (On a probably non-accidental mistake and an injustice towards a Bulgarian linguist from the recent past). *Balgarska rech* 1-2: 57–61.
- Kabakčiev K (2025) On the systematic misconceptualization of aspect East and West leading aspectology astray. *Linguistic Studies* (Donetsk National University) 49: 7–26.
- Kapkan, D (2025) BE-perfects and grammaticalization in Bulgarian and Lithuanian. A study based on data from Facebook comments. *Studies in Language*: 1–46.
- Klein W (1992) The present perfect puzzle. *Language* 68: 525–552.
- Kostov N (1939) *Balgarska gramatika* (Bulgarian grammar). Sofia.
- Kutsarov I (2007) *Teoretichna gramatika na balgarskiya ezik. Morfologiya* (Theoretical grammar of Bulgarian. Morphology). Plovdiv: Plovdiv University Press.
- Kutsarova S (2026) The phenomenon of speaker ghosting and the cancellability feature of the Turkish *-mİş* forms. *Athens Journal of Philology* (in this issue).
- Lindstedt J (1985) *On the Semantics of Tense and Aspect in Bulgarian*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.

- Marovska V (2005) *Novobalgarskiyat perfekt: funkcionalni metamorfozi i teoretichni predizvikatelstva* (The Modern Bulgarian perfect: functional metamorphoses and theoretical challenges). Sofia: Romina.
- Maslov Y (1982) *Gramatika na balgarskiya ezik* (Grammar of the Bulgarian language). Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo.
- Mladenov S (1927) Po vaprosa za praeterita indicativi v balgarskiya ezik (On the issue of *praeterita indicativi* in Bulgarian). In *Symbolae grammaticae. In honorem Ioannis Rozwadowski*. Volumen I. Kraków: 205–215.
- Moens M (1987) *Tense, Aspect and Temporal Reference*. PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh.
- Nitsolova R (2008) *Balgarska gramatika. Morfologiya* (Bulgarian grammar. Morphology) Sofia: Sofia University Press.
- Pancheva R & Stechow A (2004) On the present perfect puzzle. – In: Moulton, K., M. Wolf (eds). *Proceedings of NELS 34*: 469–484.
- Pashov P (2013) *Balgarska gramatika* (Bulgarian grammar). Sofia: Hermes.
- Penchev Y (1987) Perfekt i prevrashtane v perfekt. *Vtori mezhdunaroden kongres po balgaristika, Tom 3. Savremenen balgarski ezik* (Perfect and transformation into perfect. Second international congress of Bulgarianist Studies. Volume 3. Modern Bulgarian). Sofia: BAN: 468–474.
- Popov D (1941) *Balgarska gramatika* (Bulgarian grammar). Sofia.
- Rå Hauge K (1999) *A Short Grammar of Contemporary Bulgarian*. Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica Publishers.
- Todorova B (2010) Za nyakoi upotrebi na minalite deyatelni prichastiya v presata na Yugozapadna Bulgaria. *Yubileen sbornik na Filologicheskiya fakultet. Po povod 75-godishninata na prof. dr. Ivan Kochev. T. 2* (On some uses of past active participles in the mass media of Southwestern Bulgaria. Jubilee collection of the Philological Faculty. On the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of Prof. Dr. Ivan Kochev. Vol. 2). Blagoevgrad: 72–79.
- Vendler Z (1957) Verbs and times. *The Philosophical Review* 66(2): 143–160.
- Verkuyl H (1972) *On the Compositional Nature of the Aspects*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Verkuyl H (1993) *A Theory of Aspectuality. The Interaction between Temporal and Atemporal Structure*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Verkuyl H (2022) *The Compositional Nature of Tense, Mood and Aspect*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Wu S (2026). Pragmatic dimensions of aspects in English: theory and practice. *Athens Journal of Philology* (in this issue).
- Yao, X (2024) *The Present Perfect and the Preterite in Late Modern and Contemporary English: a Corpus-Based Study of Grammatical Change (Studies in Corpus Linguistics 114)*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.



## Pragmatic Dimensions of Aspects in English: Theory and Practice

By Shinian Wu\*

*Aspect as part of the TAM system of English is both a grammatical representation of the temporal properties of a situation and a lexico-semantic designation that delimits a verb in its scope of action such as telicity. The relationship between the two, however, is not always clearly delineated when aspectual forms are used in socially constructed discourse. The progressive aspect grammatically marks a currently occurring event which may, however, semantically express a state of condition, such as “She is living with her parents”. The present perfect aspect that grammatically expresses an action supposedly completed relative to the current moment of speaking does not necessarily indicate telicity, as in “they have tasted the ugly fruit but still wanted more of it”, as telicity is more of a function of semantic properties of a verb and its syntactic environment than what its aspectual form indicates. Interpretation of intended meaning in social interactions, which is the hallmark of research in pragmatics, is predicated on the presupposition of what is said and the implicature from what is not said but still understood. This paper will, therefore, take a two-pronged approach to examining the reciprocal connections between grammatical form and its semantic outcome, not in the vacuum of purely linguistic analysis but in the context of communicative practice, with a goal of incorporating more nuanced pragmatic functions of language in both teaching and research. This is especially relevant to second language teaching where learners often focus on form rather than function of grammatical structures.*

**Keywords:** verb aspects, telicity, state vs. action, pragmatic function, lexico-semantics

### Introduction

Aspectuality as a grammatical phenomenon embedded overtly or implicitly in verbs in English conveys a semantic sense of time in context typically denoting either an ongoing occurrence or a state of its completion. It can be realized either morphologically or lexically, or both, depending on the informational structure of a sentence and the pragmatic context in which it occurs. It essentially accounts for a verb’s action in relation to its beginning, duration, completion, or repetition (Verkuyl, 1993). While largely valid as a conceptual explanation of what verbs generally do in a sentence involving what Kabakčiev (1984, 2019) calls “participants in situations” (typically nominal subjects and objects as well as peripheral adverbial units like prepositional phrases), recent research points to the need to further explore a nuanced connection between grammatical aspects and syntactic constructions which, combined with the former, express temporal properties of a communicative event when such temporal properties are by no means static even

---

\*Professor, English Department, Grand Valley State University, USA

if the grammatical forms are. The role of semantics and pragmatics, both within and beyond the sentence level, needs to be studied (Binnick, 2020). An example in English may illustrate how the sentence *John has always liked Jet's pizza* may be interpreted for its intended meaning: a) John still likes Jet's pizza (or arguably in colloquial English: John is still liking Jet's pizza); b) John no longer likes Jet's pizza; or c) John will continue to like Jet's pizza in the future. *Present perfect* as the grammatical form thus renders four different temporal dimensions: present state, progressive, perfective, and future. In other words, the intended meaning of a verb in a sentence is the result of the complex interplay between grammatical and semantic components at the sentence level in a pragmatic context of language use. In other words, a grammatical form cannot be divorced from its use, as argued by Keizer (2015) in her functional-discourse approach to the tense and aspect analysis.

The three component categories in the English verb system (tense, aspect, and modality, or TAM for short) interact with each other within a sentence to mark a linear order of time, temporal relations between time points, and the mood or attitude of the speaker (Martins, 2020). These internal structural mechanisms are also intricately intertwined with external factors beyond the sentence level to reveal two types of meanings: 1) intra-sentential meaning, including grammatical meaning which, according to Cruse (2011), must logically be constrained by grammatical elements to allow lexical collocability so that grammar itself can generate intended meaning through lexical collocations, and 2) inter-sentential meaning, that is, discourse and pragmatically generated interpretation of a sentence. While intra-sentential meaning is mostly a function of syntactic categories that are traditionally defined semantically, for example, words in a sentence always refer to "something" in their designated categories—that is, nouns refer to persons or things while verbs denote action, although generative syntacticians would cite the famed Chomskyan quote "colorless green ideas sleep furiously" to argue for a separation of form from meaning. For the TAM system, though, both form and meaning, or more precisely, a form that performs various functions that result in various meanings, reveal the complexity of human communication as it makes a creative use of grammatical forms in TAM to pragmatically displace an event or activity from "here and now" to "there and then", as well as anywhere in-between and beyond. At the surface level, it is typically codified in grammar books and English teaching materials where tense specifies a point in time (*at 3:00 pm, on Wednesday, or a week ago*) while aspect connects a point in time in relation to other time frames, such as duration or the state of completion of an event (Kroeger, 2012). When these forms are deployed in everyday language interactions, how speakers actually displace an event or activity from "here and now" may very well vary in TAM forms they use, such as beginning a kitchen-counter conversation with a friend about a past occurrence by using past-tense verbs only to revert to the present tense when describing that occurrence. This is one of the central concerns about how an Aristotelian syllogistic grammatical theory could go awry when faced with human communication where pragmatic variables often override grammatical forms at times.

## Divergence between Form and Function

The aspect system of English intended to stipulate semantic relations of various temporal properties in conjunction with tense and modality is by no means consistent in its description and explanation. Some grammarians propose to separate all structural categories in English into form and function—what something is vs. what something does (Klammer et al, 2013). A form can serve different functions and a function can be served by different forms:

- (1) a) All candidates **articulated** their political views.  
 b) All candidates were very **articulate** about their political views.

While a single word form can be used to perform different grammatical functions, in this case, as a verb in the first sentence and an adjective in the second, different word forms (lexical categories) can serve the same function, in this case, adjectival:

- (2) a) The **happy** students celebrated the event.  
 b) The **history** students studied the event.  
 c) The **satisfied** students cast their vote on the event.  
 d) The **protesting** students criticized the event.

Of the four sentences, the bolded verbs in the latter two convey aspectual meanings outside of the typical finite verb form in a predicate: *satisfied* as a past participle while *protesting* as a present participle, both acting adjectivally (function) to describe the noun *students*.

Likewise, a prepositional phrase can perform either an adverbial or an adjectival function in the following:

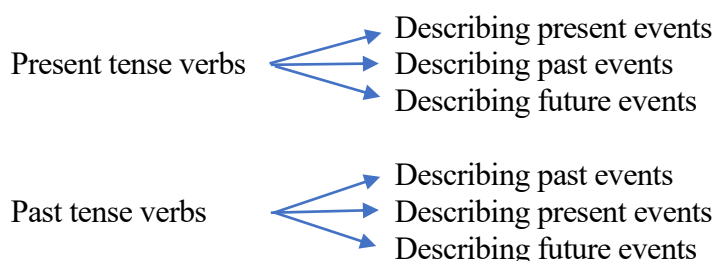
- (3) a) The students **from Côte d'Ivoire** arrived in Acra.  
 (adjectival delimiting “the students”)  
 b) The students arrived in Acra **from Côte d'Ivoire**.  
 (adverbial delimiting the verb)

This form and function dichotomy as a feature of grammatical analysis is a natural part of TAM in English. Tense markers in English on modals and regular verbs stipulate two options of straightforward time points: present and past, but when the binary system is combined with the aspectual markers, a complex structure of what Zhang & Hudson (2018) call *temporal concepts* emerges. They argue that the structure is not merely grammatical but also cognitive as it represents mental constructs. We all live and experience time at present, in the past, or in the future, although the construct of future, incidentally, is not encoded in the English tense system. It co-resides in the modal *will*, which also denotes a degree of mental determination, as implied in *I WILL go to the concert*. It is a straightforward structural system but it is by no means a linear mental representation as the three constructs also interact with each other to demarcate temporal relations among them. For example, *John will have read the book by Wednesday* projects a completed

action in the future instead of anchoring the state of a completed action at the present moment of speaking. In other words, grammatical devices along with temporal adverbial constructions (time adverbs and adverbial clauses) are employed to describe time-related characteristics of actions (Klein 2009).

The use of grammatical structures in real-life communication can, therefore, be constrained or expanded by two factors: what words mean by dictionary definition and what they are intended to mean in pragmatic contexts, the latter prioritizing social principles of discourse over literal dictionary definitions (Cutting & Fordyce, 2020). Hence, tense as an inflectional suffix falls into two separate time concepts: present and past, yet such a binary system can be expanded into a pragmatic usage paradigm that sounds perfectly normal for native speakers but confusing to those who learn English as a second language when the following is presented:

(4)



The above tense paradigm essentially discredits the very grammatical labels that most language teachers use to teach English verbs as well as elementary grammar books that describe it. Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murica (2016) report data-based studies which examine the functions of the TAM system in English discourse rather than in isolation, pointing out the divergence between tense forms and their functions in social interactions such as the following:

- (5) a) *The little girl cries her heart out. She lost her teddy bear and is convinced she will never find him.*  
 b) *The little girl cried her heart out. She had lost her teddy bear and was convinced she would never find him.* (p. 162)

One can find faults with both versions in terms of grammatical form, but neither is incomprehensible from a communicative standpoint. While the first example sounds disjointed due to the lack of consistency in verb tense use, there are pragmatically plausible explanations: *cries* places the girl at the present time describing her current state of sadness by crying; *lost* conveys a past act; and *is convinced* and *will never find* describe the girl's state of the mind at the present time. The second version appears grammatically consistent in that the past participle phrase *had lost* points to an outcome or completed occurrence at the moment of the girl's crying, and *was convinced* is concurrent with *cried*, that is, the girl cried and was convinced at the same time in the past. The verb form *would never find (him)*, however, could express a hypothetical wish at the present time or a genuine belief in

the past that the girl was not going to find the teddy bear. Whether or not she still holds the belief at the present moment is not known.

The two pragmatic scenarios are both communicatively clear and functionally valid albeit grammatically confusing from a pedagogical standpoint since most teachers, as Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia point out, treat the present tense as marking discrete units of time on a linear line: past, present, and the future. The divergence between grammarians who study the tense and aspect system in order to present a consistent and logical description for pedagogical convenience and those who approach the subject from a holistic point of view based on pragmatic factors may dissipate with a fuller account of how the use of grammatical functions can frame authentic communication.

One such bridge is presented by Huddleston et al (2022), who consider the concept of tense in a more nuanced way than ordinarily witnessed in traditional grammar for teachers. Their view of tense and its corresponding explanation of time is in line with the *present tense*  $\rightarrow$  *past event* equation in (4) as a pragmatic possibility in addition to the more traditional *present tense*  $\rightarrow$  *present event*. A verb in its present tense form can be interpreted as perfective, contrasted with the same sentence whose predicative verb is in its past tense:

- (6) a) *I **promise** to call you.* (perfective)  
 b) *I **promised** to call you.* (perfective)

It's not clear at this point if it is a case in which two grammatical forms serve the same communicative function, or the interpretation is pragmatically or lexico-semantically derived if more interactional context does not contribute to the intended meaning of both sentences. What interpretation can be rendered if the modal *will* is added to the mix? Has a promise been made?

- (7) a) *I **will promise** to call you.*  
 b) *I **would promise** to call you.*

This is an epistemologically intriguing question as the use of tense (*will* vs. *would*) seems to indicate only a degree of perfectiveness rather than a binary choice when fully contextualized towards a commitment to making a telephone call. Clearly, it is not the analysis of the grammatical form at stake; rather, it is the interpretation of the grammatical form and the inferences that can be drawn from the context in which it is used. A subsidiary question is whether the use of the modal is semantically proper or improper. If *promise* semantically already implies a perfective action, adding the futurate modal only obfuscates the status of time of the verb.

The present tense may also be used to relocate a situation into the future, that is, the *present tense*  $\rightarrow$  *future event* part of the equation (4), as illustrated in the following:

- (8) a) *The board meeting **is** at 2:00 o'clock.*  
 b) *The train **arrives** tomorrow morning.*  
 c) *The new semester **starts** after Labor Day.*  
 d) *The summer sun **rises** at 6:15 a.m. tomorrow according to weather forecasts.*

The standard explanation of the futurate constructions, which require a time adverbial, is habituality and pre-arrangement, a result of planning and scheduling or the order of nature. However, nothing prevents an English speaker from adding a futurate modal *will* to each of the sentences, although alternative interpretations may be interjected into the grammatical analysis, such as subjective judgment, assumption, hypothesis, or conjecture.

A futurate construction can also be embedded in subordinate and complement clauses whose verbs are in present tense form:

- (9) a) *The students should purchase the books before **they leave for class.***  
(Subordinate)  
b) *Don't forget your umbrella in case **it rains in the afternoon.***  
(Subordinate)  
c) *I hope that **you enjoy your trip to Chicago.***  
(Complement)

All the present-tense verbs in the clauses denote future events, although pragmatic contexts play less of a role in interpreting how the present tense form represents the future. It is more of a grammatical constraint on the if-conditional construction. While the future modal *will* can be inserted to add modality to the clause in the third sentence (9. c), it is grammatically redundant as it does not contribute more pragmatic context than the one without it.

However, pragmatics becomes less relevant in the following contrast:

- (10) a) *My sister **will come** next week.*  
b) *My sister **comes** next week.*

Huddleston et al (2022) provide a corresponding example of *The course starts next Thursday* to argue for the futurate status of the present-tense verb due to pre-arrangement. When “events are arranged or scheduled in advance” (p. 59), futurate characterizes the verb. *My sister comes next week*, therefore, implies that *my sister* probably has an airline or train ticket and is on schedule to arrive at a certain time in the future. As reasonable as it is as an explanation, the problem is not completely solved. The futurate construction *My sister is coming next week* carries much of the same pragmatic implication as *My sister comes next week*. Both are in present tense, but the verb in the former is in the progressive aspect form, which does not carry its original aspectual meaning of a continuous event or action. Two grammatical forms convey the same meaning in context.

The analysis of the form and function of grammatical constructions, therefore, necessarily involves two considerations. One is the inherent function of the form itself. The present tense is not always about the present and the past tense is not always about the past. The other is the role of pragmatic interpretation of a grammatical form. The present progressive does not always express an ongoing event or activity. Koln & Funk (2011), in describing the differences between verbs in English and those in French, place a specific emphasis on form rather than

function, and delineate the tense and aspect forms with select modals to illustrate their corresponding meanings:

- |      |   |                |
|------|---|----------------|
| (11) | a) <i>John eats breakfast.</i>            | (imperfective) |
|      | b) <i>John should eat breakfast.</i>      | (imperfective) |
|      | c) <i>John ate breakfast.</i>             | (perfective)   |
|      | d) <i>John has eaten breakfast.</i>       | (perfective)   |
|      | e) <i>John might be eating breakfast.</i> | (imperfective) |

Koln & Funk use above examples to illustrate the five grammatical forms: *eats, eat, ate, eaten, and eating* (p.57), each of which has its unique meaning, but they ignore the functions of the modals and auxiliaries that render these meanings possible—an indispensable part of form and function analysis in communication as each must be *appropriately* used in interactional contexts.

Such emphasis on form reflects the view that semantic analysis of sense relations between words is central to understanding the structural nature of meaning, that is, words mean what they inherently mean and tense means what it inherently means. New meanings are generated in sense relations between words through derivation, collocation, or idiomatization (e.g., read, write, or edit the books vs. cook the books, on the books, or be read like a book) (Hurford et al, 2007). This formal perspective, of course, is pedagogically useful as form is more teachable than function. It is easier to explain a verb in its progressive aspect form as an expression of on-going action (*I'm reading the book*—literally) than it is to recast it as a state of being (*I'm reading the book* to mean possession of the book). The former is a form-induced meaning; the latter is a pragmatically generated interpretation (Wu, 2024). In other words, a speaker can always take a grammatical form to mean what it is not lexico-semanticly designed or supposed to mean.

### Aspect and Aspectual Meaning

Any discussion of aspect and what it exactly does in English and in other languages must entail some sort of conceptual definition and functional description of its use. Yule (2022) points out that one of the unique properties of human language as distinguished from animal communication systems is displacement, which can linguistically remove an event from the immediate context of face-to-face communication into different time frames. A sound theory of aspect necessarily must incorporate observations of its consistent applicability and practical acceptability in real-life scenarios. Aspect as a verb form, acting in concert with tense, conveys a set of complex temporal and spatial relations which captures human activities and events in a time-lapsing world. The term essentially refers to two kinds of information, progressive (ongoing action) and perfective (completed or uncompleted action), encoded into verbs through the use of inflectional suffixes in English. While tense marks the time of an event, defining aspect is more nuanced; it relates to the distribution of an event over time—its duration, state of completion, or somewhere in-between (Kroeger 2012). Verkuyl (2022) painstakingly describes the terminological

problems stemming from the Latin tense system, where scholars debated the conceptual necessity of perfectum and imperfectum as natural polar opposites, and yet, the concept does not always translate into perfective or imperfective actions. In teaching and learning, as Bulatović (2013) recognizes, such terminological confusion leads to a form being interpreted or taught as indicating a function which it may not perform, for example, an action which has not been completed does not naturally or logically mean that it is still ongoing.

From a more practical perspective when language learners are faced with making grammatical choices in everyday speaking and writing, aspect may be viewed as a linguistic category that expresses how an action or event extends over time. Or more precisely, it is about whether something has been completed (perfective) or is still ongoing or habitual (progressive), even though grammatical forms that express them may vary—back to the form and function question. Further complicating the verb aspect are the noun phrases that participate in the action or event, and the nature of participation may lead to different interpretations of perfectivity, such as

- (12) a) *John sold the car last year.* (specificity, perfective)  
 b) *John sold cars last year.* (non-specificity, imperfective)

where a verb form (past tense in this case) can tell language learners that its perfectivity is contingent upon the grammatical form of a noun phrase (*the car* vs. *cars*) and its semantic scope. *The car* is specific in reference while *cars* is not. In fact, John could have sold many cars or zero cars last year to warrant the statement. Naturally, language teachers need to be able to explain how this happens from both a lexico-semantic and pragmatic standpoints. In this case, tense alone, with the help of time adverbials, may convey if an event or action is ongoing, recurring, or has been completed. Aspect plays little role in interpreting the implicit meaning behind each sentence.

Nevertheless, aspect as a grammatical form and phenomenon in the verb system of English presents more challenges in terms of its describability than tense, although the two are intimately connected in conveying a variety of time concepts in sentences. Kabakčiev (2000) acknowledges that a purely syntactic-semantic approach is not sufficient in accurately determining what aspect can do and how it functions in the limited context of a sentence and its immediate discourse; other grammatical components, such as noun phrases and adverbial clauses, play a semantically contributing and complementary role as situation participants in the theoretical framework of compositional aspects (Kabakčiev 2019, Verkuyl 1972, 2022). Understanding how aspect works not only involves formation of relevant concepts, such as the predefined temporal and spatial relations which verbs are supposed to exhibit (e.g., “tense marks time” and “aspect spreads or extends time”), but also contextual interpretation of interlocutor exchanges such as the following:

- (13) Mom to daughter: *Are you hungry?*  
 Daughter to mom: a) *Oh, I already ate.*  
 b) *Oh, I've already eaten.*

Whatever mental process is involved in the daughter's reply, that is, how the daughter comprehended mom's question and why the daughter chose (13. a) or (13. b) as her answer, is anyone's guess without more information about the larger context surrounding mom's question and daughter's answer and what the daughter's thought processes were. Comprehension alone as a function of language-internal mechanisms cannot account for how linguistic decisions are made. Language-external factors, such as a speaker's general knowledge of a larger social context and personal circumstances, inform the mostly unconscious decision-making process. In other words, the concept of aspect, together with tense and modality, is not merely a description of grammatical categories which occur as functional heads in a sentence (Zagona 2013). It involves morphosyntactic forms and semantic-pragmatic functions (Martins, 2020) in describing and explaining the usage patterns of aspect in real-world communications. In the above example (13), the internal mental process may be one of going back to a time in the past when the daughter ate something (activity) that she recalls and relays it to her mom as a matter of fact, or it could be one in which the daughter situates herself in the present time frame expressing a completed action of eating (state). Either way, the action of eating took place sometimes in the past. A remaining pragmatically driven question would be "to which of the two replies a follow-up statement of clarification can be attached in order to complete the discourse if the daughter wanted to eat more?"

- (14) a) *Oh, I already ate, but I didn't quite finish my plate.*  
 b) *Oh, I've already eaten, but I didn't quite finish my plate.*

One may be reading the tea leaves in trying to determine what the speaker *intended* to mean by each of the tense and aspect forms. The daughter's decision to pick verb forms, one being simple past and the other present perfect, is a grammatical choice with a semantic intent. Therefore, defining tense and aspect, or the relationship between the two, is a challenge, and ultimately a semantic analysis (Fooh 2023). A more controversial question is whether the simple past and present perfect forms of *eat* are telic without further lexico-semantic and pragmatic contexts, a topic to be further addressed later. It would be curious to find out, through Discourse Completion Tests (DCT) (Golato 2003, Roever 2011) from speakers of English which of the two verb constructions is semantically compatible with the amended information. Perfectivity is not at issue; telicity is.

Xu & Schmitt (2024) offer a different lens through which to further examine perfectiveness of *eat* in a different scenario:

- (15) *?She ate the cookies, but she didn't finish eating them.*

The internal structure of the predicate *ate the cookies* is perfective and telic, but the following coordinate clause says otherwise, which Xu & Schmitt consider semantically infelicitous as the cookie-eating event took place sometime earlier and the event has ended. However, as they point out at the same time, such a standard interpretation of telicity is challenged in Mandarin, as shown below with the English translation:

- (16) *Ta chi-le<sup>10</sup> na jikuai binggan, keshi mei chi wan.*  
*She eat-le those several cookies, but didn't eat finish.*  
*Translation: She ate those cookies, but didn't finish eating them.*

This raises a semantically anomalous dilemma: can a telic construction with a perfective marker end without an endpoint? Or is the concept of perfective not universal across languages due to unique internal lexico-semantic constraints or flexibility in the interpretation of the predicate, in this case, in Mandarin (Soh and Kuo 2005)? Or is *eat* semantically not considered as an accomplishment verb (see Martin, 2011 for an account of accomplishments and achievements)? Or is it a narrowly focused pragmatic context which allows for a more eclectic reading of perfectivity for *any* verb regardless of its lexico-semantic properties?

Perfect aspect is also manifested in contrast with its progressive counterpart. In English, they are each expressed as a phrase structure known as a Main Verb Phrase (Klammer et al. 2013, Koln and Funk 2011):

- (17) NP [be + {-ing} V]  
 NP [have + {-en<sup>11</sup>} V]

The Main Verb Phrase (MVP)) can generate two sets of sentences in a binary tense system:

- (18) a) *Deana is living with her parents.* (present progressive)  
 b) *Deana was living with her parents.* (past progressive)  
 c) *Deana has lived with her parents.* (present perfect)  
 d) *Deana had lived with her parents.* (past perfect)

Traditional pedagogical grammar follows formal rules based on the standard terminology in explicating the internal structure of each MVP and what it means. For the verb in (18. a), it is in present progressive form and therefore, the sentence tells the reader that Deana is, at the current moment of speaking, living with her parents as a state. Likewise, the same verb in its past tense form indicates that at a certain time in the past, say, in the month of August of last year, Deana was living at her parents' house, a state of event in the past. However, the simple present, the non-progressive form of the verb, carries much the same temporal concept as its progressive counterpart:

- (19) a) *Deana lives with her parents.* (present time, progressive)  
 b) *Deana is living with her parents.* (present time, progressive)

Both express a state of where Deana is, but (19. a) implies permanency while (19. b) conveys ephemerality. If more sentential context is added, such as *Deana is currently living with her parents, but she will soon move to Los Angeles*, the temporary nature of *Deana's living* becomes clearer. Likewise, the amended

<sup>10</sup>-*le* is a perfective particle in Mandarin that marks completion of an action.

<sup>11</sup>-*en* denotes the past participle form in English.

sentence *Deana currently lives in Los Angeles and works for a small tech company* should ascertain the state of permanency. The verb *live* shows both stative and dynamic properties at the same time. The semantic intersection of the simple present form and present progressive form as used in (19. a) and (19.b) requires more pragmatic information than what the forms denote at the surface lexico-semantic level. Larger discourse contexts often obscure distinct grammatical boundaries in which each verb form is supposed to perform its unique function *de jure* rather than *de facto*.

Grammatical specifications based on the nature of a verb (telic or atelic) hence are not always aligned with pragmatic implications frequently derived from contextual variables in communication, resulting in a mixed reality for these specifications:

(20) Present progressive = or  $\neq$  ongoing action at the present moment of speaking:

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| a) <i>Have you seen my book?</i>                | (Where is my book?) |
| <i>Oh, sorry, I'm reading it!</i> <sup>12</sup> | (I have it)         |

Present perfect = or  $\neq$  completed action relative to the present moment of speaking:

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| b) <i>Have you read the book?</i>        | (assuming completed action)    |
| <i>Yes, I have, most of it, I think.</i> | (indicating incomplete action) |

Apart from tense markers and auxiliaries (*be* and *have*), modals can also add mood and modality to aspects, such as:

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| (21) a) <i>Deana will be living with her parents.</i> | (future progressive—present) |
| b) <i>Deana would be living with her parents.</i>     | (future progressive—past)    |
| c) <i>Deana will have written the report.</i>         | (future perfect—present)     |
| d) <i>Deana would have written the report.</i>        | (future perfect—past)        |

It is terminologically awkward to name an MVP in which a modal, a tense marker, and an aspect marker combine to convey the distribution of an event over time where form and function conflict with each other. The present tense modal *will* places an event in the future where it will be witnessed as an ongoing one; in (21.b) and (21.d), the past tense form *would* could bear no relevance to time if the tense form is used to express a hypothetical event—another form and function discrepancy in the interpretation of meaning and usage.

---

<sup>12</sup>The reply is often given in a prosodic manner that puts the tonal stress on the subject “I” instead of the verb “reading” to indicate possession of the book rather than the act of reading it.

### Pragmatics of Aspect and Telicity

As previously shown, there are inconsistencies between grammatical forms and their communicative functions due to lexico-semantic constraints and context-driven interpretations when meaning is determined in a given predicate structure. Verkuyl (2022), trying to disambiguate the terminology of verb aspects, differentiates what a grammatical term is from what that term means in pragmatic reality, much akin to the form and function dichotomy that Klammer et al (2013) emphasize for meaningful analysis for teachers and learners. The binary aspectual system of perfect and imperfect, as Verkuyl points out, breaks down to four terms, two of which are Latin *perfectum* and *imperfectum* referring to form while the other two, *perfective* and *imperfective*, directly address meaning in context, where context is broadly defined as a set of form and function interaction and semantic-pragmatic interface (Yao 2024). Ultimately, a holistic analysis of the semantic relations within an MVP and between an MVP and situation participants will render what is accurately intended to be said by a given sentence.

Successful communication, therefore, impinges on inflectional morphology (tense and aspect), lexical semantics (what a word means in its narrow or broad sense), and pragmatic interpretations. As long as activities, events, and actions of human society all move through time as a matter of the law of nature or are anchored in a temporal/spatial frame, tense as a conceptual construct and aspect as a marker of time relations are universally needed in human communication even if they are not explicitly realized morphologically in all languages. Languages like Spanish and French are considered morphology-rich languages while Mandarin and Vietnamese are classified as being morphology-free. Although English is somewhere in the middle as a result of Old English having shed much of its inflections over time but kept some, the basic tenet of tense and aspect has remained central to the semantic explication of its grammatical subsystems. As such, Lieber's (2022) question of "Why do languages have morphology?" should be rephrased as "How do languages have morphology?" since morphology as a language typology can manifest itself in different ways that cannot readily be compared. Croft (2003) points out, somewhat autologically, that

*the fundamental prerequisite for crosslinguistic comparison is crosslinguistic comparability, that is the ability to identify the "same" grammatical phenomenon across languages. One cannot make generalizations about **subjects** (bold added) across languages without some confidence that one has correctly identified the category of "subject" in each language and compared subjects across languages (p. 11).*

Although Croft approaches the question from the vantage point of typological universals (e.g., the concept of grammatical subject may exist in all languages as a universal feature, but it may be phonetically null, as in Spanish, Arabic, and Mandarin). Similarly, aspect as a morphological concept in English may also be phonetically and orthographically realized in different ways to convey progressive and perfective meanings. The earlier example in (16) of how Mandarin can use the perfective particle *-le* to mark the completion (telic) of a yet-to-be completed

action (atelic) illustrates noncomparability with English even though both languages share the basic concept, which is arguably universal across languages.

The tense and aspect system of English relies on its inherent lexico-semantic properties to convey telicity. However, whether a verb in its past tense or participle forms conveys completion of an activity or action is often a function of its semantic features, that of its syntactic environment, and pragmatic interpretation. The earliest known systematic work on semantic classes of verbs was carried out by Levin (1993), who classified over 3000 verbs based on their shared meanings such as “verbs of sending and carrying” (e.g., *send, slide, bring, take, carry*, etc.) and “verbs of psychological state” (e.g., *amuse, annoy, distress, gratify*, etc.). It would be of value to find out what categories of verbs are lexico-semantically perfective inherently or in an accommodating pragmatic context, such as *We breathe air every day* vs. *We breathed air every day*, where the verb tense does not seem to affect perfectivity.

Nonetheless, telicity as a binary notion permits two states as a result of action: perfective and imperfective, as in

- (22) a) *Natsuko finished the project.* (past tense, perfective)  
 b) *Natsuko has finished the project.* (present tense, perfective)  
 c) *Natsuko will finish the project.* (future, imperfective)  
 d) *Natsuko will be finishing the project.* (future progressive, imperfective)  
 e) *Natsuko will have finished the project by Friday.* (future perfect, perfective?)

It seems clear that the verb *finish* lexico-semantically implies the end of an action, but its telicity is nevertheless determined by the MVP structures that it carries in a specific pragmatic context of use. There is no guarantee that (22. c) will take the action to an endpoint even if the verb is telic by design. One can also debate (22. e). The action has not been completed yet, but it will be in the future by a declared endpoint. Its telicity, therefore, is a moving target semantically and pragmatically as it could be either perfective or imperfective when a future time is involved.

“Didactic grammar”, as Verkuyl (2022) calls it, entails what he believes to be necessary but perhaps unstimulating approaches to explaining something analytically useful yet pedagogically complex. It ultimately is intellectually enlightening nonetheless when the correspondence between form and function, or a lack thereof, is examined. The first two examples in (22) are telic almost by virtue of the semantic nature of the verb; the latter three require more nuanced, and possibly perplexing explanations such as “atelic at the current moment but telic sometimes at a specified future time”.

Then come the grammatically intriguing challenges in interpreting telicity of what is known as subjunctive constructions:

- (23) a) *Natsuko should have finished that project.* (past, imperfective)  
 b) *Natsuko shouldn't have finished that project.* (past, perfective)

The intuitive reaction from most speakers of English will prompt them to conclude that the subject of (23. a) did not complete the task while the subject of (23. b) did, albeit the wrong task, despite the fact that the former is not a negative

sentence while the latter is. In the meantime, (23. a) could paradoxically deem the opposite to be also true: that the subject is hypothesized to have completed the task. In other words, there are two contrary interpretations for an MVP with the same modal in the same tense form and aspectual marking. Huddleston et al (2022) address this semantic contradiction by attributing the negative reading (Natsuko did not finish the project) to the deontic interpretation and the positive reading (Natsuko DID finish the project) to the epistemic interpretation of the sentence. However, the examples they provide (*He must have overslept* vs. *He must apologize*) are analytically too perspicuous to shed a useful light on the subjunctive construction in (23 a.), which is a single aspect form that conveys two completely opposite meanings. It is attribution without a pertinent explanation.

A more convincing account is offered by Mortelmans (2023) about how epistemic modality can be triggered: evidentiality and idiosyncratic discourse-pragmatic features. There must be an indication of inferential evidence for the sentence, combined with the speaker's conjectures backed by world knowledge. If Natsuko was assigned the project by the speaker some time ago and she was told to complete it by a certain deadline, if the speaker knew the size and complexity of the project and the approximate amount of time needed to complete it, and if the speaker also knew Natsuko's good work ethic, then it would be reasonable to believe that Natsuko has finished the project by the deadline. It is evidence and knowledge based. The modal *should* expresses a conjecture based on the speaker's inferential evidence. Telicity, therefore, is not only lexico-semantically determined but perhaps more importantly, it is validated by known pragmatic factors in discourse beyond sentential semantics. This, again, shows that verbal aspect as a grammatical form is inevitably shaped by pragmatic considerations beyond the sentence level in determining meaning and interpretation.

## Conclusion

The complex nature of verbal aspects does not lie only in the semantic properties of verbs; they are inherently associated with what surrounds them within and beyond the context of a sentence to facilitate pragmatically appropriate communication. Aspect is a grammatical category with its own systematicity in description such as *verbs in present perfect form describe the present state of an action which occurred in an unspecified time in the past*. However, a grammatical category does not always align with what it is designed to express in pragmatic contexts. That is, the grammatical aspect of *perfect* is not always perfective, and the *present progressive* does not always convey an ongoing action. Likewise, present-tense verbs can be used to relate past events in everyday casual conversations, and past-tense verbs can reference a future, albeit hypothetical, occurrence. Even the division between stative and dynamic verbs can be obscured by their pragmatic functions. Justin Timberlake's jingle *I'm lovin' it* as an advertising slogan for the fast-food chain McDonald's is stylistically voguish and sentimentally expressive. When tourists visiting the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in mid-October exclaim "*I'm liking it!*" when canoeing in a winding stream amidst the forest's magnificently picturesque fall colors there, a grammarian who hears it will need to come up with a category

of verbs that denotes emotion, attitude, and action simultaneously, or perhaps verbs of mental action if cognitive activity counts as action.

In general, aspect is lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic. It is lexical in that words have their own inherent, historically derived literal meanings and grammatical characteristics. It is syntactic in that the meaning of a verb is derived by situation participants. Words alone do not determine the meaning of a sentence; syntactic structures do. Aspectual meaning is also pragmatically shaped by the communicative context in which an aspect form is used by interlocutors for their intended purposes, and such interactive processes are linguistic, nonlinguistic, paralinguistic, and extralinguistic. A sound theory of aspect and aspectuality must account for all four in its analysis and pursuit of universal features.

## References

- Binnick R (2020) *Aspect and aspectuality*. In B. Aarts, A. McMahon, & L. Hinrichs (Eds.), *The handbook of English linguistics* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (pp. 183-205). Hoboken: Wiley.
- Bulatović V (2013) Modern theories of aspect and Serbian EL2 learners. *Belgrade English Language and Literature Studies* 5:65-79.
- Croft W (2003) *Typology and universals* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cruse A (2011) *Meaning in language: An introduction to semantics and pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cutting J, Fordyce K (2020) *Pragmatics* (4<sup>th</sup> edition). London: Routledge.
- Foohs M (2023) *Tense and aspect: A semantic analysis*. Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Golato A (2003) Studying compliment responses: A comparison of DCTs and recordings of naturally occurring talk. *Applied Linguistics*, 24(1), 90–121.
- Huddleston R, Pullum G, Reynolds B (2022) *A student's introduction to English grammar* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hurford J, Heasley B, Smith M (2007) *Semantics: A course book* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kabakčiev K (2000) *Aspect in English: A "Common-Sense" View of the Interplay between Verbal and Nominal Referents*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Kabakčiev K (2019) On the history of compositional aspect: vicissitudes, issues, prospects. *Athens Journal of Philology*, Vol 6/3, 201-224.
- Kabakčiev K (1984) The article and the aorist/imperfect distinction in Bulgarian: an analysis based on cross-language "aspect" parallelisms. *Linguistics*, 22: 643-672.
- Keizer E (2015) *A Functional discourse grammar for English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Klammer T, Schulz M, Volpe A (2013) *Analyzing English grammar* (7<sup>th</sup> edition). London: Pearson.
- Klein W (2009) *How time is encoded*. In W. Klein and P. Li (Eds.), *In the expression of time* (pp. 1-43). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Koln M, Funk R (2011) *Understanding English grammar* (11<sup>th</sup> edition). London: Longman.
- Kroeger P (2012) *Tense, Aspect, and Modality*. In P. Kroeger (Ed.), *Analyzing grammar: An Introduction* (147-172). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Larsen-Freeman D, Celce-Murcia M (2016) *The grammar book*. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Boston: Heinle Cengage Learning.
- Levin B (1993) *English verb classes and alternations: A preliminary investigation*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Lieber R (2022) *Introducing morphology* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin F (2011) *Revisiting the distinction between accomplishments and achievements*. In From now to eternity (43-64). Cahiers Chronos Vol. 22. Berlin: Brill.
- Martins A (2020) Tense, Aspect, Mood and Modality. *Scripta*, 24(51), 27–45. <https://doi.org/10.5752/P.2358-3428.2020v24n51p27-45>
- Mortelmans T (2023) *Inferential must from a contrastive Dutch-German perspective: Semantics and constructional analysis*. In M, Carretero, J. Marin-Arrese, & E. Romero, & V. de la Rosa (Eds.). Evidentiality and epistemic modality: Conceptual and descriptive Issues (137-172). New York: Peter Lang.
- Roever C (2011) Testing of second language pragmatics: Past and future. *Language Testing*, 28(4), 463-481.
- Soh HL, Kuo J (2005) *Perfective aspect and accomplishment situations in Mandarin Chinese*. In H. Verkuyl, H. Swart, & A. Hout (Eds.), Perspectives on Aspect (pp. 99-216). New York: Springer.
- Verkuyl H (2022) *The compositional nature of tense, mood, and aspect*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Verkuyl H (1993) *A theory of aspectuality: the interaction between temporal and atemporal structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Verkuyl H (1972) *On the compositional nature of the aspects*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing.
- Wu S (2024) Pragmatics of TAM: Its descriptive and observational adequacy. *Athens Journal of Philology* Vol 11/3, 203-222.
- Xu J, Schmitt C (2024) Pragmatic accommodation in judging event culmination. *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT)*. 34: 502–523.
- Yao X (2024) *The present perfect and the preterite in late and contemporary English: A corpus-based study of grammatical change*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Yule G (2022) *The study of language* (8<sup>th</sup> edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zagona K (2013) *Tense, aspect, and modality. Part V: Syntax and the internal interfaces*. In M. den Dikken (Ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Generative Syntax* (746-792). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zhang M, Hudson J (2018) The development of temporal concepts: Linguistic factors and cognitive processes. *Frontiers in Psychology*. Vol 9: 1-14.

## The Greek Present Perfect as an Exponent of Cancellability

By Desislava Dimitrova\*

*This paper offers an analysis of a proposal made in some recent publications according to which the present perfect verb form in several modern Indo-European languages must be regarded as an exponent of cancellability in some cases<sup>1</sup>. The proposal is accompanied by a conjecture that while in some languages, viz., Bulgarian, the present perfect features cancellability as a value encoded in strictly grammatical terms, in other languages, particularly Modern Greek and English, cancellability is not encoded but only indirectly signaled, yet it remains an inherent value of the present perfect. The conjecture is analyzed on the basis of data from Modern Greek, Bulgarian and English and is found to correspond to the characteristics of the Greek language in structural and semantic terms.*

**Keywords:** *present perfect; cancellability; witnessedness; Modern Greek; Bulgarian; English*

### Methods of Study. Aims of the Investigation

The methodological framework of the study integrates descriptive, comparative, and deductive approaches. The descriptive component accounts for the specific features of the perfect and other verb forms. The comparative component examines primarily Greek and Bulgarian, with occasional reference to English where necessary for the formulation of conclusions. The deductive approach is applied to the analysis of material drawn from Greek.

### On the Theoretical Framework employed

The aim of this study is to determine the function of the Present Perfect in Modern Greek, with particular emphasis on its semantic and functional distinction from the Aorist. The analysis is grounded in Kabakčiev's (2019) concept of the 'ghost speaker', which is identified through the examination of Bulgarian sentences fitting the semantic-syntactic schema '*X said that* [content of *that*],' where the subordinate clause may contain verb forms from all nine tenses. In applying this framework, the study integrates Greek temporal forms into the second part of Kabakčiev's schema in order to trace the specific features of Greek verb forms, with special attention to the Present Perfect. According to Kabakčiev (2019), five of the nine Bulgarian verb forms within the semantic-syntactic schema are

---

\*Assistant Professor, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

<sup>1</sup>The notion of cancellability itself is borrowed from Grice's (1975/1989) seminal essay and is assigned a specific meaning related to the proposition of a sentence: "non-cancellable content represents a state of affairs which is only true", "cancellable content is a state of affairs viewed as either true or not true" (Kabakčiev 2022: 388).

ungrammatical (the Aorist, the Imperfect, the Pluperfect, the Future in the Past, and the Future Perfect in the Past), while four are grammatical (the Present, the Present Perfect, the Future, and the Future Perfect). In the present study, the schema is further refined by including both perfective and imperfective verb forms:

- (1)
- a. \*Manolis kaza, che Irini **napisa/pisa** razkaza (aorist, perfective/imperfective)
  - b. \*Manolis kaza, che Irini **napisheshe/pisheshe** razkaza (imperfekt,<sup>2</sup> perfective/imperfective)
  - c. \*Manolis kaza, che Irini **beshe napisala/beshe pisala** razkaza. (pluskvamperfekt, perfective/imperfective)
  - d. \*Manolis kaza, che Irini **shteshe da napishe/shteshe da pishe** razkaza. (futurum preteriti, perfective/imperfective)
  - e. \*Manolis kaza, che Irini **shteshe da e napisala/shteshe da e pisala** razkaza (futurum exaktum preteriti, perfective/imperfective)
  - f. Manolis kaza, che Irini **e napisala/ e pisala** razkaza. (perfect, perfective/imperfective)
  - g. Manolis kaza, che Irini **shte napishe/shte pishe** razkaza (futurum, perfective/imperfective)
  - h. Manolis kaza, che Irini **shte e napisala/shte e pisala** razkaza (futurum ekzaktum, perfective/ imperfective)
  - i. Manolis kaza, che Irini **pishe/ \*napishe** razkaza. (presens, perfective/ imperfective)

I may point to yet another instance of ungrammaticality – specifically, in constructions where a perfective verb appears in the present tense within a *che*-clause (*‘that clause’*). In such cases, grammaticality is determined solely by the aspect of the verb. Cf.:

- (2)
- a. Petar said that Maria is arriving (*‘Petar kaza, che Maria pristiga’*) (present tense, imperfective)
  - b. \*Petar said that Maria arrive (*‘Petar kaza, che Maria pristigne’*) (\*non-actual present, perfective aspect)

A comparable phenomenon is observed in Greek. Perfective aspect verbs are not used independently in a sentence without particles such as *ας* ‘let’ or *να* ‘to’. This is why forms like *ας γράψω* ‘let me write’ and *να γράψω* ‘to write’ are treated as subjunctive mood forms (*υποτακτική έγκλιση*) rather than present tense forms in traditional Greek grammars.

Analyzed on Bulgarian data, propositions in sentences with present perfects are thus either true or not true and, conversely, propositions in sentences with preterits are read by the hearer as only true, which means that they are non-cancellable. To give an example, a sentence with a perfect like

---

<sup>2</sup>I use the Latin names of the terms (including spelling) for verb tenses (except for the term aorist). It cannot be replaced by the term preterit, as there are languages in which there is no distinction between aorist and imperfect.

(1f) above demonstrates cancellable content: Irini may have written the story or, in other words, in principle, it is either written or not written.<sup>3</sup> A present perfect verb form such as *e napisala* in (1f) is non-witnessed and cancellable, and the latter means that the proposition is either true or not true. This arises by virtue of its nature – the information is obtained from third parties or is based on an inference, hence its truthfulness is not guaranteed (Kabakčiev 2022). Conversely, sentences such as (1a), (1b) with an aorist or an imperfect demonstrate non-cancellable content: Irini did write the story and the speaker must be believed that Irini has written the story. A witnessed verb form is non-cancellable. Sentences (1a), (1b) demonstrate the use of a witnessed verb form, non-cancellable. The non-grammaticality in sentences of this type had been noted in Bulgarian linguistics (Ivančev 1976: 356, Lindstedt 1985: 90, Nitsolova 2008: 284). However, it was thought to arise solely under the impact of *verba dicendi* (such as *said*) and had remained totally unexplained up to the discovery of the speaker ghosting phenomenon (Kabakčiev 2018).

Speaker ghosting was soon found to be present in Montenegrin too (Bulatović 2018), a closely related language where the dependent clause in the *X said* [content of *that*] semantico-syntactic schema again bans the use of a non-cancellable form (*da stiže* ‘arrived’) and requires a perfect form (*da je stigao* ‘to have arrived’):

- (3) a. Džon reče da je stigao (perfekt)  
(lit.) ‘John said he has arrived’  
b. \*Džon reče da stiže (aorist)  
‘John said he arrived’

According to Kabakčiev, the ungrammaticality in examples with the aorist and imperfect – both witnessed forms – is due to the “ghost speaker” phenomenon. He argues that the ungrammaticality of the *futurum preteriti* and *plusquamperfect* stems from the fact that these verb forms carry non-cancellability content, rather than from their witnessed nature. While I do have certain reservations here, which I will outline further below, I fully agree that, from a semantic perspective, these forms – as well as the aorist and imperfect – convey non-cancellability content. Kabakčiev is notably the first Bulgarian linguist to draw attention to ungrammatical sentences of this kind, and he provides a detailed explanation of their ungrammaticality. My disagreement lies in his classification of these forms as non-witnessed. In a very recent study focused on witnessedness in Bulgarian, V. Stamenov analyzes and describes the paradigm of witnessed verb forms, which includes both the *plusquamperfect* and the *futurum preteriti* (Stamenov 2025).

The meaning of witnessedness in the Bulgarian language is grammaticalized, with the formal marker being the morpheme *-h/-she* (*-x/-ue*), a marker absent only in the aorist forms for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, although V. Stamenov (2025) provides arguments for this phenomenon. In five of the nine indicative tense forms – *pisaH*, *pisa*, *pisa* (aorist), *pisheH*, *pisheSHE* (imperfect), *byaH pisal*, *beSHE pisal*

<sup>3</sup>Although in pragmatic terms this sentence is normally interpreted as meaning that Irini has written the story.

(plusquamperfect), *shtyaH da pisha*, *shteSHE da pishe* (futurum preteriti), *shtyaH da sŭm pisal*, *shteSHE da e pisal* (futurum exaktum preteriti). On the other hand, “all grammatical formations that do not contain the marker *-ch/-she-* are part of the unmarked grammeme of non-witnessedness, which forms a privative opposition with the grammeme of witnessedness” (Stamenov 2025: 234).

I do not agree with authors who claim that the morphemes *-ch/-sche* (e.g., Pashov) are markers of the aorist and imperfect tenses. The formal markers of the aorist are the morphemes positioned before *-x/-ue*, and the same applies to the formal markers of the imperfect. Cf.: *chet-O-h* and *chet-YA-h*, *chist-I-h* and *chist-E-h* (Kutsarov 2007). In third-conjugation verbs, the thematic vowel *-a/-ya* is retained across all verb forms (*gled-a-m*, *gled-a-sh*, *gled-a* – present tense; *gled-a-h*, *gled-a* – aorist; *gled-a-h*, *gled-a-she* – imperfect), see Dimitrova (2020).

As for the witnessed forms and their classification not under mood but rather under a category related to the utterance (unlike mood, which reflects the speaker’s attitude toward the action) (Kutsarov 2022; Stamenov 2025), I will discuss this issue in a future study.

My position is that it is precisely the grammaticalized witnessedness in Bulgarian (in the five tense forms – aorist, imperfect, plusquamperfect, futurum preteriti, futurum exaktum preteriti), whose verbal forms are characterized by the differential feature of “non-cancellable content,” as established by Kabakčiev, that causes the manifestation of ungrammaticality in sentences of the type *X said that* (the content of the *che*-clause includes one of the five witnessed forms).

Stamenov aptly observes that “when the speaker has not witnessed the reported information, they cannot construct their narrative solely through non-renarrative and non-inferential forms of the aorist-imperfect type” (Stamenov 2025: 233).

Chakarova also rightly notes that Bulgarian “possesses greater possibilities than other (including related) languages in the sphere of narrativity, especially with regard to the realization of accounts of past events” (Chakarova 2008: 147). She identifies four narrative subsystems, with the witnessed forms (aorist, imperfect, pluperfect, future-in-the-past, and future-exact-in-the-past) constituting the so-called memory plane, while the L-forms like *hodil e*, *hodel e*, *hodel* are distributed across the other three narrative planes. In the plane of immediacy falls the perfect, although it is not the main tense form (for examples, see Chakarova 2025: 164). In the plane of constation – the inferential (Bulgarian *konkluziv*), and in the plane of renarration – the renarrative.

### The Greek non-witnessed Forms as Exponents of the Feature Cancellability

Grammaticalized witnessedness in Bulgarian can also be demonstrated on an interlinguistic level. In Greek, grammaticalized witnessed forms are absent, which allows all tense forms to be used in constructions of the type “*X said that* [content of the *that*-clause],” with the resulting sentences being grammatically correct. The only exception is the present tense with an aorist (perfective) stem (4k), where ungrammaticality arises due to a different circumstance that we have already mentioned. See the examples:

- (4) a. O Manólis eípe óti i Eiríni **égrapse** tin istoría (aorist, perfective)  
(literally) ‘Manolis said that Irini **wrote** the story’
- b. O Manólis eípe óti i Eiríni **échei grápsei** tin istoría. (perfect, perfective)  
(literally) ‘Manolis said that Irini **has written** the story’
- c. O Manólis eípe óti i Eiríni **eíche grápsei** tin istoría. (pluskvamperfect, perfective)  
(literally) ‘Manolis said that Irini **had written** the story’
- d. O Manólis eípe óti i Eiríni **égrafe** tin istoría (imperfect, imperfective)  
(literally) ‘Manolis said that Irini **was writing** the story’
- e. O Manólis eípe óti i Eiríni **tha grápsei** tin istoría (futur, perfective)  
(literally) ‘Manolis said that Irini **will write** the story’
- f. O Manólis eípe óti i Eiríni **tha gráfei** tin istoría (future, imperfective)  
(literally) ‘Manolis said that Irini **will write** the story’
- g. O Manólis eípe óti i Eiríni **tha égrafe** tin istoría (futurum preteriti, imperfective)  
(literally) ‘Manolis said that Irini **would write** the story’
- h. O Manólis eípe óti i Eiríni **tha échei grápsei** tin istoría (futurum exactum, perfective)  
(literally) ‘Manolis said that Irini **will have written** the story’
- i. O Manólis eípe óti i Eiríni **tha eíche grápsei** tin istoría (futurum exactum preteriti, perfective)  
(literally) ‘Manolis said that Irini **would write written** the story’
- j. O Manólis eípe óti i Eiríni **gráfei** tin istoría (presens, imperfective)  
(literally) ‘Manolis said that Irini **writes** the story’
- k. \*O Manólis eípe óti i Eiríni **grápsei** tin istoría (presens, perfective)

The last example (4k) is impossible to translate literally due to the lack of verb aspect in English. *Tha grápsei* (futurim, perfective) and *tha gráfei* (futurum, imperfective) are translated literally the same way again due to the lack of verbal aspect, see (4e), (4f). The aspectual difference could be conveyed compositionally.

### Concepts of the Present Perfect in English, Bulgarian and Greek Grammar

Let us see how researchers interpret the perfect forms. The semantics that Comrie attributes to the English Present Perfect can, in general terms, be summarized as “the perfect indicates the continuing significance of a previous situation” (Comrie 1985: 52). Analyzing the Present Perfect and the Preterit in Old English, researchers point out that the Present Perfect, formed with *be* or *have*, “is regarded more specifically as a perfective.” They then add, however, that “in Old English the perfective aspect can just as well be expressed by simple preterit forms” (Quirk & Wrenn 1955: 79; cited in Elsness 1985: 245).

In English, the Present Perfect is usually associated with the following uses:

- Perfect of result (also called static perfect);
- Experiential (or existential) perfect;
- Perfect of persistent situation;
- Perfect of recent past (also called “hot news” perfect) (Dahl 1985: 132).

It is worth noting that the designation of these meanings as “types of perfect” refers to overlapping levels of use, in which semantic and functional categories are not strictly distinguished but rather intersect. Dahl emphasizes that these are in fact types of uses of the perfect (Dahl 1985: 133). According to McCoard (1976), the meanings associated with perfect forms (*have* + *Ved*) fall into four categories:

- a) current relevance (CR)
- b) indefinite past (ID)
- c) extended now (XN)
- d) emended past (EB) (McCoard 1976: 5).

Although they use the terms anterior/perfect (meaning “previous”) to denote perfect semantics, the authors of *The Evolution of Grammar* arrive at a similar definition: “a past action that is relevant to the situation” (Bybee et al. 1994: 62). As the basic semantics of the perfect, Fenn highlights the common feature present in all definitions of the Present Perfect, namely, its relevance to the present moment (Fenn 1987: 214).

Aikhenvald points out that in Georgian the traditional name for the perfect is “first evidential.” Its forms are used when the speaker reports a past action not directly witnessed but inferred on the basis of some present result, or when the action is conveyed in the words of another informant (Aikhenvald 2004: 112).

A large majority of Bulgarian linguists consider the perfect tense to be characterized by resultativeness (Pashov 1976, Gerdzhikov 1973, Kutsarov 2007). According to Marovska, however, the Bulgarian perfect expresses qualitative rather than resultative semantics (Marovska 2003: 53). She also allows for a modal interpretation of the perfect in a broad sense, namely, that the speaker expresses his or her assessment “of the verbal subject as a doer” (ibid.). Marovska points out that for the Bulgarian language it is of essential importance that “the mechanism formally connected with the perfect tense for transforming witnessed taxis forms into distant ones (cf.: for example *beshe chel* > *bil e chel* ‘he had read’ > ‘he is said to have read’; *shteshe da chete* > *shtyal e da chete* ‘he would read’ > ‘he is said to have been about to read’, etc.). As a result of this, the distant and renarrative paradigms are formed” (Marovska 2013: 270). It should be clarified that within the distant paradigm the author includes inferential forms such as *hodel e* (‘he is said to have been going’), as well as forms such as *hodil e* (‘he is said to have been’, called “distant aorist”), which formally coincide with the indicative perfect. She adds that, unlike the indicative perfect, the distant aorist forms denote an action from a past situation “in which the speaker did not consciously participate and therefore refers to it in a distant way” (Marovska 2013: 271). Let us see what is meant by this, using examples:

- (5) a. Predi tri godini, prez septemvri, Ivan **hodi** (aorist) v Atina na izlozhba  
 ‘Three years ago, in September, Ivan **went** (aorist in Bulgarian sentence)  
 to Athens to an exhibition’

From the witnessed form the transition to the distant one can be observed in the following example:

- (5) b. Petar kaza, che predi tri godini, prez septemvri, Ivan **e hodil** (distanten aorist)  
 v Atina na izlozhba  
 ‘Petar said that three years ago, in September, Ivan **had been** (distant  
 aorist in Bulgarian sentence) to Athens to an exhibition’  
 c. Ivan **e hodil** v Atina na ekskurziya. (**hodil e** in its genuine perfect function,  
 expresses qualitative)  
 ‘Ivan **has been** to Athens on a trip’  
 d. Az **sam hodil** v Atina (this is a fact)  
 ‘I **have been** to Athens’

From the examples (5c), (5d) it is clear that the Bulgarian perfect cannot, in all of its uses, be regarded as expressing cancellability. The meaning is conveyed by the perfect forms mainly in cases where there is a subordinate clause attached to a main clause (of the type *X kaza, che...*, *Spored X...*, etc.), in which the speaker positions themselves as a non-witness of the reported event. For this reason, I consider it more precise to interpret cancellability as a semantics of the perfect that manifests itself only in certain contexts, i.e. as a type of usage of the perfect. In structures of the type *X kaza, che...* in the subordinate clause the aorist and imperfect forms are inapplicable in Bulgarian, on the other hand, because they explicitly express the meaning of witnessedness, which, as already shown above, is grammaticalized. Here we fully agree that the two witnessed forms cannot combine within the main and subordinate clause because of the phenomenon of speaker ghosting (Kabakčiev 2018).

Let us see how the researchers interpret the perfect forms in Greek grammars. Some authors (Triandafilidi, Tsolaki) place the perfect among the present tenses. According to Triandafilidi and Tsolaki, forms like *echo grápsi* (‘I have written’) express an action that is completed (*αποτελειωμένο*) (Triantaphyllidēs 1982: 146, Tsolakis 1983: 202). Mackridge states that the perfect tense expresses an action completed in the past but significant in the present. Additionally he notes that in colloquial speech the aorist is often preferred, even in contexts where in English or German the perfect would be used:

- (6) a. To ékana ídi  
 ‘I already did it.’

Instead of

- (6) b. To écho káneí ídi  
 ‘I have already done it’

It is pointed out that the use of *παρακείμενος* is more common in written language (6b) and more “polite” or typical of formal registers (Mackridge 1985: 170).

In one of the most comprehensive works in traditional Greek linguistics, authored by Bampiniōtēs & Klerris (2005), *Grammar of Modern Greek* it is notable that the perfect tenses – *παρακείμενος* (perfect), *υπερσυντέλικος* (pluperfect), and *συντελεσμένος μέλλοντας* (future perfect) – are not included among the so-called “characteristic” tense forms of Greek. Instead, they are treated in a special chapter. The authors conceptualize the perfect forms as a third verbal aspect.

Another researcher highlights “two main oppositions that characterize the system [of the verb]: 1. Resultativeness (perfect) – non-resultativeness (present, aorist) 2. Completeness (perfective) (aorist) – incompleteness (imperfective) (present)”, see Georgia (2008: 196).

Let us consider the following examples to determine whether the Greek perfect possesses the value “cancellable content:”

- (7) a. O X είπε ότι to tréno **échei ftásei/éftase**  
 ‘X kaza, che vlakat **e pristignal/\*pristigna**  
 (literally) ‘X said that the train **has arrived/arrived**’
- b. Katalavaíno/akouóo ότι to tréno **échei ftásei/ éftase**  
 ‘Razbiram/chuvam, che vlakat **e pristignal/\*pristigna**  
 (literally) ‘I understand/hear that the train **has arrived/arrived**’
- c. O X den xérei an to tréno **échei ftásei/éftase**  
 ‘X ne znae dali vlakat **e pristignal/\*pristigna**  
 (literally) ‘X doesn’t know if the train **has arrived/arrived**’
- d. O X den pistévei ότι to tréno **échei ftásei/éftase**  
 ‘X ne vyarva, che vlakat **e pristignal/\*pristigna**  
 (literally) ‘X doesn’t believe that the train **has arrived/arrived**’
- e. O X den éinai sígouros ότι to tréno **échei ftásei/éftase**  
 ‘X ne e siguren, che vlakat **e pristignal/\*pristigna**  
 (literally) ‘X is not sure that the train **has arrived/arrived**’
- f. O X den tha symfonísei ότι to tréno **échei ftásei/éftase**  
 ‘X nyama da povyarva, che vlakat **e pristignal/\*pristigna**  
 (literally) ‘X will not agree that the train **has arrived/arrived**’
- g. Símfona me/ópos anaférei/ópos dílose o X, to tréno **échei ftásei/éftase**  
 ‘Spored/kakto saobshtava X/kakto zayavi X, vlakat e  
 pristignal/\*pristigna’  
 (literally) ‘According to/as reported by/as stated by X, the train **has arrived/arrived**’

It becomes clear that whereas in Bulgarian the use of the perfect is not only possible but obligatory – otherwise ungrammaticality arises due to the phenomenon of the “illegitimate speaker” – in Greek the use of the perfect form is possible but largely not necessary.

This is because the perfect forms in subordinate clauses are part of a semantic-syntactic structure whose first part requires every subordinate clause to possess the feature of cancellability. This shows that in languages such as English and Greek,

where the preterite (past tense in English; aorist and imperfect in Greek) is not possess non-cancellability, it can be used in the subordinate clause - because it can be coerced into cancellability by the main clause (e.g., “I understand/hear that...”) or by the first part of the sentence, expressed through adverbs (such as “probably,” “according to reports,” etc.) which require cancellability from the dependent clause.

## Conclusion

This paper confirms Kabakčiev’s hypothesis (2022: 399): while non-witnessedness and cancellability are typical by perfect forms (PP) in Bulgarian, in Greek and some other languages they are only signaled, but not by default, rather internally/essentially. Since the narrative system in Bulgarian includes other L-forms in addition to the perfect, namely the renarrative and the conclusive, it should be noted that these forms are also characterized by non-witnessedness and cancellable content. Cf.: *X kaza, che vlakat e pristignal* ‘X said that the train has arrived’ (indicative perfect), *X kaza, che vlakat pristignal* ‘X said that the train arrived’ (renarrative), *X kaza, che vlakat mozhe bi e pristignal* ‘X said that the train may have arrived’ (inferential aorist). For this reason, cancellability cannot be interpreted as an invariant meaning only of the perfect, but rather as a contextual use, applicable to the perfect as well as to the renarrative and the conclusive.

Regarding the values of witnessedness and non-cancellability, the Greek preterite – represented by both the aorist and imperfect – does not grammatically mark these two values (unlike Bulgarian), but they are implied by default. Thus, when forms of the aorist or imperfect occur in simple sentences, they inherently convey witnessedness, as in ‘Oi kalesménoi éftasan’ (‘The guests arrived’) and ‘Oi kalesménoi éftanan’ (‘The guests were arriving’), where the speaker presents the events as directly observed. The same default interpretation of witnessedness is preserved even in reported contexts, for example in ‘I María eípe óti éftasan oi kalesménoi’ (‘Maria said that the guests arrived’), where the embedded aorist still implies that the original event is treated as witnessed. By contrast, when a perfect form is used in simple sentences, non-witnessedness is inherently implied, as illustrated by ‘Oi kalesménoi échoun ftásei’ (‘The guests have arrived’), where the perfect signals that the speaker infers or learns of the event indirectly rather than having witnessed it.

## References

- Aikhenvald A (2004) *Evidentiality*. Oxford: OUP.
- Bampiniōtēs G, Klerris H (2005) *Grammatikē Neas Hellēnikēs* (Grammar of Modern Greek). Athēna: Elinika Gramata.
- Bulatović V (2018) Negramatičnost aorista u izričnim rečenicama u cmogorskom (Non-grammaticality of the aorist in dependent clauses in Montenegrin). *Lingua Montenegrina* XI/2, 22, 3–13.
- Bybee J, R Perkins, W Pagliuca (1994) *The Evolution of Grammar. Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Comrie B (1985) *Tense*. Cambridge: CUP.

- Chakarova K (2008) Narativnite prehodi v romana "Antihrist" na Emiliyan Stanev (The narrative transitions in Emiliyan Stanev's novel Antichrist). In: *Emiliyan Stanev i bezkrajnite lovni poleta na literaturata. Yubileen sbornik po povod 100 godini ot rozhdenieto na pisatelya* (Emiliyan Stanev and the endless hunting fields of literature. Jubilee collection on the 100 years since the writer's birth). V. Tarnovo, 147–159.
- Chakarova K (2025) *Kategoriyata vid na glagola v savremenniya balgarski ezik* (The category of aspect of the verb in Modern Bulgarian). Plovdiv: Plovdiv University Press.
- Dahl Ö (1985) *Tense and aspect systems*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dimitrova D (2020) Morfostruktura na glagolite ot tretto sprezhenie (Morphological structure of the verbs of the third conjugation). In: *Nauchni trudove na Plovdivskiya universitet* (Scientific works of Plovdiv University), 59(1), A, 2021 – Filologia 150–159. [https://lib.uni-plovdiv.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/1118/NTF\\_2021\\_59\\_1\\_A\\_150\\_159.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://lib.uni-plovdiv.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/1118/NTF_2021_59_1_A_150_159.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- Elsness J (1997) *The Perfect and the Preterit in Contemporary and Earlier English*. Berlin/ New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Fenn P (1987) *A Semantic and Pragmatic Examination of the English Perfect*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Georgia K (2008) Sravnenie na mezhdu glagolnite sistemi na novogratskiya i balgarskiya ezik. In: *Societas Classica* 3(1), 192–202 <https://journals.uni-vt.bg/sc/bul/vol3/iss1/art16>
- Gerdzhikov G (1973) Za spornite vaprosi na balgarskata temporalna sistema (On the controversial issues of the Bulgarian temporal system). *Izvestiya na Instituta za balgarski ezik* 22, 125–150.
- Grice HP (1975/1989) Logic and conversation. In P Cole, J Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics III: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press: 41–58.
- Ivančev S (1976) Problemi na razvitiето i funktsioniraniето na modalnite kategorii v balgarskia ezik (Problems of the development and the functioning of modal categories in Bulgarian). In P. Pashov & R. Nitsolova (eds). *Pomagalo po balgarska morfologiya. Glagol* (A textbook in Bulgarian morphology. The verb). Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 348–359.
- Kabakčiev K (2018) On non-grammaticality, "speaker ghosting", and the raison d'être of English sequence of tenses (SOT). *Athens Journal of Philology* 5(3), 221–253.
- Kabakčiev K (2019) Za fenomena "nelegitimen govoreshht" i saglasuvaneto na vreme i naklonenie v balgarskiya ezik (On the speaker ghosting phenomenon and tense and mood sequence in Bulgarian). *Proglas* 2, 272–281.
- Kabakčiev K (2022) An attempt at unveiling the mystery of the present perfect – by analyzing it as a device to counterbalance the impact of other grammatical entities. In A-M Sougari & V Bardzokas (eds), *Selected Papers of ISTATL 24*. Thessaloniki: 384–400, doi: <https://doi.org/10.26262/istal.v24i0.9196>
- Kutsarov I (2007) *Teoretichna gramatika na balgarskiya ezik. Morfologiya* (A theoretical grammar of Bulgarian). Plovdiv: Plovdiv University Press.
- Kutsarov K (2022) *Balgarskite leksemni klasove i uchenieto za chastite na rechta* (The Bulgarian lexeme classes and the parts of speech theory). Sofia: Colibri.
- Lindstedt J (1985) *On the Semantics of Tense and Aspect in Bulgarian*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- Mackridge P (1985) *The Modern Greek Language*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marovska V (2003) Istoricheskiyat razvoii na perfekta i prevrashtaneto mu v kategoriya za sastoyanie (The historical development of the perfect and its development into a category of state). *Slavistika II. XIII Mezhdunaroden kongres na slavistite v Lyublyana* (Slavic Studies II. 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Slavists in Lyublyana), 41–58.
- Marovska V (2013) *Referentsiya i referirane v sveta na ezika* (Reference and referring in the world of language). Plovdiv: Plovdiv University Press.

- McCoard R W (1976) *Tense Choice and Pragmatic Inferences: A Study of Preterit/Perfect Oppositions in English*. Los Angeles: University of California.
- Nitsolova R (2008) *Balgarska gramatika. Morfologiya* (Bulgarian grammar. Morphology). Sofia: Sofia University Press.
- Pashov P (1976) Balgarskite glagolni vremena. Za osnovnite im znacheniya i onagledyavaneto im sas shemi i formuli (The Bulgarian verb tenses. On their basic meanings and their explanation through schemata and formulae). In: Pomagalo po balgarska morfologiya. Glagol (A textbook in Bulgarian morphology. The verb). Ed. Ruselina Nitsolova & Petar Pashov. Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 186–209.
- Stamenov V (2025) Znachenieto svidetelstvenost v savremenniya balgarski ezik (The witnessedness meaning in Modern Bulgarian). Plovdiv: Plovdiv University Press.
- Triantaphyllidēs M (1982) *Neoellēnikē grammatike* (Grammar of Modern Greek). Athens: Organismos Ekdoseōs Didaktikōn Bibliōn.
- Tsolaki H (1983) *Neoellēnikē grammatike* (Grammar of Modern Greek). Athens: Organismos Ekdoseōs Didaktikōn Bibliōn.



## **The Phenomenon of Speaker Ghosting and the Cancellability Feature of the Turkish *-mİş* Forms**

*By Sema Kutsarova\**

*The paper deals with the phenomenon of speaker ghosting in Modern Turkish and the cancellability of *-mİş* forms. The approach is based on findings in several publications by Krasimir Kabakčiev on speaker ghosting in Bulgarian, in which the reason for the non-grammaticality of certain types of Bulgarian sentences with two witnessed verb forms is established and explained. For such sentences to become grammatical, they must be re-phrased using perfect verb forms in the dependent clause – which are cancellable. Cancellability roughly means “either true or not true”, whereas Bulgarian preterit verb forms (aorist, imperfect) are witnessed and hence non-cancellable, meaning “only true”. After being found in Bulgarian, speaker ghosting was soon found by Bulatović to exist also in Montenegrin, a language similar to Bulgarian but different in its tense paradigm. This paper reports the existence of speaker ghosting in a third Balkan language, Turkish. Sentences of the Bulgarian type discussed above with two *-DI* verb forms in Turkish are witnessed and non-grammatical as in Bulgarian, and their incorrectness is again due to speaker ghosting. In order to become grammatical, they must be re-phrased using cancellable verb forms in the dependent clause as in Bulgarian and Montenegrin. Definitively established on data from three Balkan languages already, the regularity receives the status of a Balkansprachbund trait.*

**Keywords:** *speaker ghosting in Turkish; cancellability of *-mİş* forms; non-cancellability of *-DI* forms; witnessing and non-witnessing*

### **Introduction**

Issues related to the typology, semantics and pragmatics of the perfect (present perfect) in the languages around the world are some of the most complex and debatable in linguistics. The literature is superabundant and describes many of the formal and semantic manifestations of the perfect in hundreds of languages (see, Comrie 1985: 24; Bybee et al 1994; Dahl 1985). But there is lack of clarity as to its nature, its *raison d'être*, and this leads to disputes and to generalizations that the inconsistencies in the descriptions of the perfect are rooted not simply in the lack of terminological clarity:<sup>1</sup> difficulties in the observation and interpretation primarily arise from the semantics and the grammatical realization of the perfect in separate languages where differences and discrepancies are frequently observed.

There exist numerous descriptions of the semantics of the perfect in cross-language terms, but from the point of view of its formation it is most frequently a

---

\*Senior Lecturer, Medical University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

<sup>1</sup>Many alternative terms have been used to refer to the perfect, for example, anterior (Bybee et al. 1994: 51–105), resultative, etc.

periphrastic verb form consisting of a past (active) participle of the full verb preceded by a present-tense auxiliary which is either *have* (as in English, etc.), or *be*, as in Bulgarian (*sam* ‘be’), etc. English: *I have traveled*, Bulgarian *patuval sam* ‘I have traveled’. Described in the literature are many instantiations of the perfect – formal and semantic, in numerous languages (Comrie 1985: 24, Bybee et al. 1994; Dahl 1985). The status of the perfect from the point of view of universal grammar in Chomsky’s (1957, 2015) terms appears clear, in the sense that it emerged and developed in certain languages because it was necessary – and did not emerge and develop in languages in which it was not necessary. However, given the fact that there are languages, many, in which the perfect **does not exist**, the semantics encoded by it – whatever it is or could be, ought to be treated as superfluous from the point of view of universal grammar. A serious question arises: why and when is the perfect necessary?

It is worth noting that just as the manner of its formation in the world’s languages is remarkably similar (from a past participle preceded by an auxiliary *be* or *have*),<sup>2</sup> so are the descriptions of its semantics in languages that are otherwise genealogically very different. For such languages, see Dimitrova et al. (2025) – about Greek, Georgian and Bulgarian. The striking similarities between languages that are genealogically rather different support a conjecture that the reason for the cross-language existence of the perfect is **not** what it is thought to express – most often “current relevance” (some consequence of a situation realized in the past), but something totally different. Precisely this conjecture is explored here on Turkish material and put to the test.

The definitions of the perfect as denoting “current relevance” are maintained by the majority of researchers (Comrie 1985: 24, Bybee et al. 1994: 61, Aarts et al. 1994: 300, Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 143, Downing and Locke 2002: 361) but some explain the perfect as signifying “resultativity” or similar meanings like “indefinite past”, “embedded past”, “continuative past”, “preterit”, “extended now”, “expanded now” (Lindstedt 1985: 96, McCoard 1978, Fenn 1987, McCawley 1988: 226, Elsness 1997: 67–68, Holton et al. 1997: 300, Musan 2002, Androutsopoulos 2002: 36, Aikhenvald 2004: 112, Eul 2008: 99, 106). All these explanations and definitions of the perfect are **very unclear** and produce many serious issues – in essence and terminological. The description of the semantics of the perfect suffers from grave defects characteristic of the grammars of all or almost all languages and leading to a situation where authors systematically label the perfect “mystery”, “puzzle” and “riddle”, (Klein 1992, Pancheva and von Stechow 2004, Higginbotham 2009: 160). The special circumstance that in English the perfect excludes adverbials of past time adds to its “mystery”; most other languages do not manifest this feature. The semantics of the perfect hinges on differences between the perfect and the preterit and the literature is full of such assertions – but the explanations are poor. The attempts fail to explain the essence of the perfect, including the feature considered to be the major one, “current relevance”, understood as countering a situation denoted by the corresponding preterit verb form and interpreted – otherwise adequately – as separated from the present.

---

<sup>2</sup>In some languages, e.g., German, Dutch, Danish, both auxiliaries (*be* and *have*) are used.

General language typology with the innumerable publications available describing the perfect leads researchers to assume that the so-called *current relevance* of a past situation can perhaps be viewed as “the prototypical meaning of the perfect”, a thesis maintained by many (Comrie 1985: 24, Bybee et al 1994: 61, Aarts et al 1994: 300, Lindstedt 2000: 378, Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 143, Downing and Locke 2002: 361). A smaller group of authors maintain that “the meaning of the perfect”, i.e., the central one, is that of *resultativity*. But in one of the first monographs on the perfect, McCoard (1978: 5) lists four major concepts covering the “meaning of the perfect”, namely, current relevance, indefinite past, extended now and embedded past. Resultativity is absent. Indeed, McCoard maintains that “current relevance” expresses a present state *resulting* from past action, but obviously this cannot be equalled to the idea that the perfect expresses result or resultativity in general. Dahl (1985: 132–133) lists four major prototypical uses of the perfect, the first one being “perfect of result”. However, indicatively, the author also calls it “stative perfect” – and, again, it stands to reason to maintain that the idea of stativity is distanced from the notion of resultativity.

Soon after Dahl, Moens raised the strongest criticism ever about “the semantics of the perfect”, pointing out that

*the descriptive accounts of the Perfect are vague, they make unprincipled distinctions between different uses of the Perfect, without explaining why the Perfect should fulfil such an arbitrary looking collection of functions.”*

Moens (1987: 94). This criticism is fully valid today. There are no essential differences between the attempts at characterizing “the semantics of the perfect”. More recently, Lindstedt (2000: 378) argued in a similar vein that there are no perfects that only have (what he calls) a “current relevance function”. The idea of result or resultativity in the “meaning of the perfect” is also discussed in some newer publications (Plungian 2016: 9–14, Yao 2024). In both it is *not* found to be revealing of some “global semantics of the perfect”. Plungian (2016: 9–15) is critical of the idea of resultativity as its main feature, arguing that interpreting the perfect as a resultative has many vulnerable points. In her brand-new book on cross-language features of the perfect, Yao (2024: 39–43) refers to what she calls “variability in perfect uses” and to “resultative uses” of the perfect, pointing out that along with “resultative uses” there are also “experiential” ones. Thus Yao’s (2024: 43–45) publication also provides no opportunity for finding some “unified meaning of the perfect”.

In the descriptions of the *typology* of the perfect, three sets of problems (at least) can be outlined, related to: (i) the definition of the “semantics of the perfect”: how “the perfect meaning” of the verb form is determined; (ii) the role of the perfect in the system of other verb categories; (iii) the diachronic aspect of the development of the perfect (Plungian 2016: 7–26). Plungian reaches the following generalizations: there is no universal formula for determining the semantics of the perfect where polysemy is observed, and its contextual use, even in closely related languages, is rather different.

Concerning the problem field related to the place of the perfect in the system of other verb categories – in the grammatical systems of particular languages with the presence of perfects in them and in the universal classification of verb categories, one of the key questions asked is whether the perfect is “aspect” or

“tense”. The answers given are either absent or unclear. Some analyses place the perfect in the aspect zone, as a special type of resultative, or in the taxis-tense zone as a form pointing to a precedence relative to a reference point. As for English grammars in particular, in the previous century they used to entertain the idea of the perfect as an aspect (Quirk et al. 1980). As pointed out recently (Kabakčiev 2020: 127), the “second nature” of the English perfect – apart from its tense value (a mixture between present and past) was then sought in three directions, the first of which was labeled “aspect” – together with the indefinite tense forms and the progressive ones. Today this understanding is discarded as wrong and outdated. The progressive is an aspect but the perfect and the indefinite tense verb forms are not.

As a summary of this introduction, what is certain is that the perfect is one of the most widespread grammatical verb forms (according to the data in Dahl 1985; Bybee et al. 1994), observed in at least one third of the languages around the world. The analytical perfect is a characteristic feature of languages in the European areal, and the perfect formed with the auxiliary *have* is considered to be a major typological feature of the languages of the European type (Dahl 1985, 2000, Thieroff 2000, Haspelmath 2001, Cysouw 2011).

### **A BRIEF Overview of how the perfect, or, rather, the perfect-like *-mIs*<sup>3</sup> Verb Forms, are treated in Turkology**

Before considering in more detail the perfect in Modern Turkish, some major theses in Turkology with respect to its verb paradigm must here roughly be recalled. As is well-known, the Turkish tense-aspect-modality (TAM) paradigm contains rich semantic distinctions indicated by a complex verb inflection system where a single suffix may simultaneously express two or more tense, aspect, modality (evidential) categories, while complex TAM perspectives are compositionally expressed by a combination of these suffixes (Erguvanlı 2011). Tense and modal relations in Turkish can be expressed through morphological grammatical categories (tense and mood of the verb form) or lexical/phraseological means such as adverbials and particles (Tosun 1998, Özsoy and Taylan 1993, Taylan 2000). It must be noted that grammatical markers of verbs do not always have a differentiating function, whereby a certain verb flexion may express simultaneously tense/aspect and/or mood (Aksu Koç and Slobin 1982, Aksu Koç 1988, Kornfilt 1997, Taylan 1997); or, in other words, a morpheme may express different semantic categories – and these are called syncretic morphemes.

According to the general approach developed in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the perfect is described as a special tense verb form, a crosslinguistic gram type concentrating four meanings (types) attributed to the perfect in the languages of the world: (i) perfect of result; (ii) experiential perfect; (iii) perfect of persistent situation; (iv) perfect of recent past (Comrie 1976: 56–61, Dahl 1985, Bybee et al. 1994, McCawley 1971, Dahl 1985: 132, Ritz 2012: 883, etc.). But it is worth emphasizing that traditional grammars of Turkish do not deal with the

---

<sup>3</sup>The capitalized vowel indicates alternations in vowel quality due to vowel harmony. Capitalized consonants indicate changes due to phonological rules such as devoicing.

perfect in this way and in such detail. The majority of specialized publications do not recognize it as part of the Turkish grammatical system or in the generally accepted sense of the perfect as a periphrastic verb form comprising of an auxiliary *have/be* in the present and a past active participle of the main verb (as in English, etc.). Instead, certain verb forms are described that can be related to “perfect meanings” as in the theoretical frameworks developed by Comrie (1976), Dahl (1985) and Bybee et al. (1994). Turkological specialized publications view “the perfect” as a special verb form comprising aspectual and temporal (tense) meanings, and the *-miş* past-tense morpheme is regarded as a perfect or quasi-perfect grammeme. Its semantic nature and the devices used for the relevant encoding are described within the framework of the general verb paradigm and are presented in the section of the indicative mood – a controversial solution, where terms such as *öğrenilen geçmiş zaman* ‘heard/ learned past tense’, *duyulan geçmiş zaman* ‘heard past tense’, *miş’li geçmiş zaman* ‘past tense with *-miş*’, *belirsiz geçmiş zaman* ‘indefinite past tense’ are used.<sup>4</sup> Employed in the specialized literature are also terms such as praeteritum-perfectum, preterit, perfect, past indefinite (dubitative, renarrative, narrative), etc. Descriptive terms are also used, such as “past *-miş* tense” and “past *-DI* tense”, *-miş* participle as a predicate, etc. (Emre 1945: 281, Swift 1963, Gencan 1979: 362, Lewis 1967: 122, Ediskun 1999: 176, Göknel 2012: 170, etc.). The large Russian-language specialized Turkological literature also abounds in such terms: (Rus.) *proshedshee rezultativno-neochevidnoe vremya* ‘past resultative-nonwitnessed tense’ (Korkina 1970: 81), *proshedshee neochevidnoe* ‘past nonwitnessed’ (Kononov 1956: 231), *proshedshee subektivnoe* ‘past subjective’ (Kononov 1956: 231, Scheka 2007: 202, Geniş 2007: 45), *absentiv-perfect* ‘absentive-perfect’ (Sorokin 2009: 134), *proshedshee-nastoyashchee* ‘past-present’ (Dmitriev 1960: 50).

A “historical perfect” is often mentioned as characteristic of the Oghuz languages, see Tenishev as editor of the *Turkic Grammar* (2002: 183–185). Along with other researchers, he calls *-miş* “the leading form of the perfect” for Turkic languages (*ibid.*), with Modern Turkish seen as having developed a whole class of verb forms with a *-miş* formant. In his understanding of the verb paradigm, this affix serves to obtain an aspecto-temporal form constituting a binary opposition with the so-called past categorical tense (a preterit formed with a *-DI* affix) and is associated with two major semantic values: *absentivity* – a semantic value in which the speaker is not a direct witness of the situation and infers about the information in it or about its result on the basis of reports of a third party (third parties); and *perfectness* – a semantic value in which the situation precedes the moment of utterance or some other point of reference, whereby at the relevant moment/point there occurs some result of the situation, most frequently in the form of a state (static perfect, i.e., a grammatical construction signifying a permanent state occurring as a result of a previous situation), see also Sorokin (2017: 1036). A conclusion made with respect

---

<sup>4</sup>Classifying *-miş* forms as belonging to an indicative paradigm is as controversial and wrong as classifying Bulgarian aorists and imperfects as belonging to an indicative paradigm – which is the traditional Bulgarian grammatical explanation. From the point of view of theoretical linguistics, if certain verb forms are witnessed – in this case aorists and imperfects – undoubtedly they are modal forms and do not, and cannot, belong to an indicative paradigm.

to the ancient Uyghur language that “it cannot be maintained that it had “pure” forms of the resultative perfect, because the semantic area of the perfect has unclear borders that intersect with the aspect meanings of the resultative and the completive and include an evidential seme” (Telitsin and Alieva 2023: 337) can also be made with respect to Modern Turkish.

Finally, as argued by Erguvanlı (2011: 102), the verbal affixes *-DI* and *-mİş*, which are in a paradigmatic relation, occupying the same place in the tense paradigm, are always contrasted in their modal functions (factive vs evidential) but are not always contrasted in the aspect or the tense value(s) that they carry – an argument that corresponds to a recent thesis (Kutsarova 2025) describing the Turkish *-DI* and *-mİş* preterit verb forms as having an aspectually ambivalent nature.

### Methods and Aims of the Study

This investigation of the cancellability feature of the Turkish perfect-like *-mİş* forms will use a mixture of methods: (i) analysis of Turkish data – a semantico-syntactic and pragmatic investigation of sentences containing Turkish *-mİş* forms against *-DI* verb forms; (ii) analysis through the prism of the idea of cancellability vs non-cancellability of the Turkish *-mİş* and *-DI* verb forms; (iii) use of English and partly Bulgarian as metalanguages for understanding the *raison d’être* of cancellability; (iv) comparative analyses between Turkish and Bulgarian data; (v) employment of a deductive approach to the Turkish data – described in Dimitrova (2021) and consisting in initially formulating universal features widely found across natural languages. A search is then initiated for their realization to be revealed in and across languages.

The major aim includes, first, an analysis of a recent theoretical model, represented in publications by Kabakčiev (2017; 2018; 2020; 2022) and based on the discovery of the so-called speaker ghosting phenomenon on Bulgarian data, according to which the perfect *has no semantics of its own* but exists in order to exercise certain structural functions – in a way similar to the functions of articles and gender. The second aim is to apply this theoretical model to Turkish language data to check whether the model is valid for Modern Turkish. The third aim is to compare the data found about the Turkish language to data about the perfect in other languages, particularly English and partly Greek, in order to outline certain possible paths of carrying out typological research related to the characteristics of the perfect.

### The Phenomenon of Speaker Ghosting – discovered on Bulgarian Data

The phenomenon of speaker ghosting was found on Bulgarian data and initially reported in three publications (Kabakčiev 2017: 209–216, 2018, 2019) using the notion of cancellability. The notion “cancellability of the perfect” was first used and explained in Kabakčiev (2017: 246–259) but, obviously due to the fact that this publication is a grammar, no reference is found in it to Grice’s (1975/1989) notion of cancellability. Reference to Grice’s (1975/1989) notion is

made in Kabakčiev (2018: 239), whereby Kabakčiev's notion is similar to Grice's but differing in some details. The Bulgarian sentence (1a), non-grammatical, was the first one used to explain speaker ghosting:

- (1) a. \*Petar kaza<sub>AORWITN</sub>, che Maria pristigna<sub>AORWITN</sub>  
 'Peter said that Maria arrived'  
 b. Petar kaza<sub>AORWITN</sub>, che Maria e pristignala<sub>PERFECTNON-WITN</sub>  
 (literally) 'Peter said that Maria has arrived'

Bulgarian sentences with *verba dicendi* such as (1a), belonging to the *X said that* [content of *that*] semantico-syntactic schema, are non-grammatical – along with many other structurally and semantically similar sentences, e.g., (2a). The reason for the non-grammaticality, initially roughly presented, is the following. The two verbs in (1a) *kaza* 'said' and *pristigna* 'arrived' are perfective aorist forms which are witnessed: the speaker personally experienced (saw or heard, etc.) the two situations. The non-grammaticality of (1a) and (2a) is due to the violation of a strict requirement for the second part of the *X said that* [content of *that*] schema to contain a cancellable verb form, i.e., one which is either true or not true (Kabakčiev 2018; 2019). Thus, in order to become grammatical, the sentences (1a) and (2a) must be changed to (1b) and (2b) with perfect verb forms – which are cancellable. But it is not that the relevant sentences are non-grammatical simply because of the presence of two witnessed verb forms. As can be seen in (2a), there exist similar Bulgarian sentences with one witnessed verb form – only in the dependent clause, which are, however, also non-grammatical. On the other hand, there are sentences with two witnessed verb forms which are fully correct, cf. (2b):

- (2) a. \*Spored Petar Maria pristigna<sub>AORWITN</sub>  
 'According to Peter Maria arrived'  
 b. Petar vidya<sub>AORWITN</sub>, che Maria pristigna<sub>AORWITN</sub>  
 'Peter saw that Maria arrived'

See below for detailed reasons why.

Very soon after the discovery of speaker ghosting on Bulgarian data, Bulatović (2018) found the phenomenon in Montenegrin. Sentences identical to Bulgarian (1a), non-grammatical, are non-grammatical in Montenegrin too, compare (3a) vs the grammatical (3b) with a perfect verb form, cancellable:

- (3) a. \*John reče<sub>AORWITN</sub> da stiže<sub>AORWITN</sub>  
 'John said he arrived'  
 b. John reče<sub>AORWITN</sub> da je stigao<sub>PERFECTNON-WITN</sub>  
 (literally) 'John said he has arrived'

Speaker ghosting, as described in Kabakčiev (2018), consists in the following. In a Bulgarian non-grammatical sentence such as (1a) with two witnessed verb forms (in this case aorist), the speaker knows that Maria arrived because he/she witnessed (saw/heard) her arrival. But, apart from asserting that Maria arrived –

through the dependent clause, the speaker also asserts Peter's words that Maria arrived. Maria's arrival thus becomes problematic. Because if we solely rely on the words of a third party that Maria arrived, Maria may not have arrived. What is more, the proposition of (1a) contains not one but two speakers: one speaker is saying that Peter said that Maria arrived, another is saying that he/she witnessed Maria's arrival. But if one speaker is saying that Peter said that Maria arrived, this opens two possibilities: for Maria to have arrived or not to have arrived, and the second of these possibilities is canceled by the second speaker's assertion that Maria arrived. Arguably, it is the second speaker's words, who saw Maria's arrival, that ought to be trusted. Conversely, the first speaker, who reported Peter's words about Maria's arrival, ought to be regarded as a fake (illegitimate) speaker, a ghost speaker (Kabakčiev 2018: 229ff). As for sentences such as (2a), their non-grammaticality again rests on the first clause which, despite the absence of a verb form in it, also requires that the second part of the whole sentence contains a cancellable verb form.

### Speaker Ghosting explained on Turkish Data

Seven years after the discovery of the extremely intriguing phenomenon of *speaker ghosting* on Bulgarian data and soon after that confirmed on Montenegrin data, it can now be reported that the phenomenon also exists in Turkish, another language in the Balkansprachbund. Turkish (4a) is a non-grammatical sentence, just like Bulgarian (1a). In order to be correct, it must contain a *-miş* verb form, which is cancellable:

- (4) a. \*Petır söyledi ki Maria geldi  
       ‘Peter said that Maria arrived’  
       b. Petır söyledi ki Maria gelmiş  
       (literally) ‘Peter said that Maria has arrived’

Compare another sentence of this type in Turkish, (5a), again non-grammatical. Re-phrased by using a perfect verb form – which is cancellable, it becomes grammatical, (5b):

- (5) a. \*Annem söyledi ki kardeşimi bir inek tekmeledi<sup>5</sup>  
       ‘My mother said that a cow kicked my brother’  
       b. Annem söyledi ki kardeşimi inek tekmelemiş  
       (literally) ‘My mother said that a cow has kicked my brother’

<sup>5</sup>Dependent clauses with the conjunction *ki* are more typical of the colloquial style in Turkish. They are understandable for the native speakers who, however, regard as more natural dependent clauses obtained from a non-finite construction with a deverbal noun, *-DİĞİnİ* ‘that (the cow) kicked (my brother)’: factive nominal; derived with past tense + nominalizer suffixes; in combination with a case affix, for example: *Annem, ineğin kardeşimi tekmelediğini söyledi* ‘My mother said that a cow has kicked my brother’. Ediskun (1999: 309) provides the following examples: *Biliyorum ki beni seviyor* ‘I know (that) he/she loves me’ = *Beni sevdiğini biliyorum* ‘I know (that) he/she loves me’; *Görülüyor ki çalışmamışsınız* ‘It looks like you haven’t worked’ = *Çalışmadığınızı görüyor* ‘It looks like you are not working’. For the purposes of this paper, sentences containing the conjunction *ki* ‘that’ are used, because they are a literal translation of the English and Bulgarian equivalents and represent more clearly the phenomena analyzed.

A comparison using a direct translation from Turkish into Bulgarian – of (5) into (6) – reveals that the two languages demonstrate the same regularity in a perfect fashion:

- (6) a. \*Mayka mi kaza, che krava ritna brat mi  
 ‘My mother said that a cow kicked my brother’  
 b. Mayka mi mi kaza, che krava e ritnala brat mi  
 ‘(lit.) My mother said that a cow has kicked my brother’.

The Bulgarian sentence (6a) is non-grammatical exactly in the same way as its Turkish translation correspondence (5a). And any other sentence like (5a) in Turkish will be non-grammatical, whereby grammaticality will have to be achieved by replacing the witnessed verb form in the dependent clause with a non-witnessed one – hence cancellable.

### The Traditional View in Turkology of the difference between *-miş* and *-DI* Forms

Turkish does not have exactly the same type of perfect verb forms as English does. Simple past tense forms in Turkish with suffixes *-dı, -di, -du, -dü; -tu, -ti, -tu, -tü* and reported (renarrated) past tense forms with suffixes *-miş, -miş, -muş, -müştü*, function, very generally speaking, as either present perfect or past tense forms in English:

- (7) a. Berna odasını temizledi  
 ‘Berna cleaned/has cleaned her room’  
 b. Berna odasını dün temizledi  
 ‘Berna cleaned her room yesterday’  
 c. Berna odasını temizlemiş  
 ‘Berna has cleaned her room’  
 d. Berna odasını temizlemişti  
 ‘Berna had cleaned her room’

In (7a) the simple past form *temizle-di* (from *temizle-* ‘to clean’ + *-DI*) is morphologically past tense. In isolation, however, it may correspond either to an English simple past (‘cleaned’) or to a present perfect (‘has cleaned’). The choice of translation depends on the pragmatic context. If the emphasis lies on the result still being relevant (e.g., the room is now clean), an English present perfect is appropriate. If the event is located at a definite time in the past, the English simple past is more natural. Thus, (7a) illustrates the underspecification of *-DI* between perfect and past readings.

The presence of the adverbial *dün* (‘yesterday’) in (7b) anchors the event to a specific past time. This temporal anchoring blocks a present perfect interpretation in English, since English perfect forms are incompatible with explicit past time adverbials. Consequently, the only natural English equivalent is the simple past (‘cleaned’). The Turkish *-DI* form remains formally identical to (7a), but the temporal adverbial narrows its interpretation to a definite past reading.

In (7c) the verb bears the suffix *-mİş*, marking the reported past. This morpheme encodes indirectivity, inference, or non-witnessed information, and it may also carry mirative nuances ('apparently, surprisingly'). Semantically, it often overlaps with the English present perfect in contexts where the focus lies on the present relevance of a past action. Thus, (7c) can be rendered as 'Berna has cleaned her room', especially if the speaker is inferring the action from evidence (e.g., the room looks tidy). Unlike *-DI*, the *-mİş* form does not simply indicate a past fact but signals the speaker's stance toward the source of information.

The combination of *-mİş* with the pluperfect marker *-DI* (*-mİş-tİ*) in (7d) yields a form that functions as a past perfect. This construction locates the reported or inferred event as anterior to another past reference point, analogous to the English past perfect ('had cleaned'). Importantly, the *-mİş* element retains its inferential/reported value, but the *-DI* suffix shifts the temporal perspective backwards, producing a meaning close to the English pluperfect.

Examples (7a–d) demonstrate that Turkish expresses meanings covered in English by simple past, present perfect, and past perfect through a system that relies primarily on the opposition between *-DI* (witnessed past) and *-mİş* (reported past), with additional combinations (e.g., *-mİş-tİ*) for relative past reference. The mapping between Turkish and English is therefore not one-to-one: while Turkish forms are morphologically simpler, their interpretation depends heavily on discourse context, temporal adverbials, and the evidential value of *-mİş*.

Where does Modern Turkish stand in the landscape of languages with perfects? Let us discuss Arslan-Kechriotis' (2006) reasoning. This author, along with many other Turkologists, asserts that evidentiality in Turkish is coded by the verbal suffix *-(I)mİş*<sup>6</sup>. What is meant by "evidentiality" here is its instantiation (only one of many) as non-witnessing. Quoting Comrie (1976: 56–61) and Iatridou et al. (2001) among others, Arslan-Kechriotis lists four different types of perfect): (i) universal, (ii) experiential, (iii) perfect of result, and (iv) perfect of recent past, whereby Iatridou et al. (2001) use the term *existential perfect* as uniting the latter three. Various other aspects of the "semantics of the perfect" have been analyzed in many publications, see Johanson (1971, 1994, 2000); Grunina (1976); Comrie (1976, 1985); Aksu-Koç (1988); Izvorski (1997); Erguvanlı (1997, 2001); Kornfilt (1997); Keleşir (2000); Cinque (2001); Iatridou et al. (2001); Şener (2011), etc. But all these studies fail to propose a reasonable explanation of the "semantics of the perfect" or of its "functional features", in contrast to Kabakčiev's papers (2018; 2019; 2020; 2022; 2023) which offer a completely novel insight on the essence of the perfect, its *raison d'être* – on a language, Bulgarian, which has been in contact with Turkish for many centuries. It could be hypothesized – though it would be difficult to prove – that the non-witnessed nature of the Bulgarian perfect results from language contact: a borrowing in Bulgarian grammar from Turkish grammar. Analogously with the Turkish *-DI* forms: they feature the value "witnessed" just like the Bulgarian preterit verb forms (aorist and imperfect) do.

---

<sup>6</sup>The literature provides two approaches in this regard. The first one affirms that *-mİş* and *-İmİş* are two distinct suffixes with distinct functions in Turkish. According to the second one, there is only one morpheme *-(I)mİş*. This discussion is beyond the scope of the present paper, for more detail see Gül (2006).

And there remains a crucial question about both languages: why did it happen so that they developed witnessed verb forms, on the one hand, and non-witnessed ones, on the other. Actually, this question is easy to answer. If a language has non-witnessed verb forms, it is absolutely logical for it to have witnessed verb forms too. And vice versa, if a language has witnessed verb forms, it is logical for it to have also non-witnessed ones. Communication would be practically impossible in a language with only witnessed verb forms – or with only non-witnessed ones.

### **The Turkish non-witnessed *-mİş* Forms as Exponents of the Feature Cancellability versus the witnessed *-DI* forms**

The prevailing view in Turkish linguistics is that the suffixes *-mİş* and *-DI* encode “the speaker’s source of information for a given statement” but in the descriptive grammars of Turkish and in the general linguistic literature these morphemes are also classified as “expressing tense and aspect meanings”: a description that is broad and unclear. Many authors (Gencan 1979: 275–276, Ediskun 1999: 175–176, Hengirmen 2006: 220, Korkmaz 2009: 584–599) label *-mİş* “a past tense suffix” and a “hearsay past marker”, taking *-DI*, the “narrated past tense marker”, as its counterpart. The otherwise considerable amount of research on the morphosyntactic properties of verbal and nominal inflectional affixes in Turkish (Lewis 1967, Underhill 1976, Johanson 1971, Kuruoglu 1986, Aksu-Koç 1988, Erguvanlı 1988, 1996, Slobin-Aksu 1982, Yavaş 1980, 1982, Kornfilt 1997, Şener 2011, Yordanova 2015: 94, among others) does not provide a clear picture of how these properties relate to the general TAM systems of better studied languages such as English.

A brief comparison of the Turkish TAM system and its *-mİş* and *-DI* verb forms with the Bulgarian TAM system shows full or almost full parallelism: (1) Turkish *-DI* verb forms encode witnessing in the past domain – which in Bulgarian corresponds to the witnessing encoded by aorist and imperfect forms; (2) conversely, non-witnessing in Turkish, encoded in the past domain by *-mİş* verb forms, corresponds in Bulgarian to the non-witnessing effectuated by perfect and renarrative verb forms (for further detail on Bulgarian, see Kabakčiev 2023).

### **More on the cancellability of the Turkish *-mİş* Forms<sup>7</sup>**

Widely used in linguistic theory is the notion of *speaker*, which has the notion of *hearer* as its counterpart; *speaker* and *hearer* are entities present in every meaningful sentence in every language. As argued in Kabakčiev (2019), in this case it is mainly the speaker that we should be interested in. Let us analyze sentences (8) and check the status of the speaker in sentence (8b): a grammatical one corresponding to the non-grammatical (8a).

- (8) a. \*Annem söyledi ki kardeşimi inek tekmeledi  
 ‘My mother said that a cow kicked my brother’

<sup>7</sup>The analysis is based on Kabakčiev’s (2019: 275–276) theoretical framework, applied to Turkish.

- b. Annem söyledi ki kardeşimi inek tekmelemiş  
(lit.) ‘My mother said that a cow has kicked my brother’.

(8b) comprises two clauses, *Annem söyledi* ‘My mother said’ and *kardeşimi inek tekmelemiş* ‘a cow has kicked my brother’. The speaker producing (8b) first reports that a person, *annem* ‘my mother’, said something and that the speaker personally perceived (witnessed) what this person said. This is effectuated through the verb form *söyledi* ‘said’, which is a past witnessed form (*görülen/-Dİ’li geçmiş zaman* ‘witnessed past tense’) encoding the personal witnessing by the speaker of the situation reported. Phrased in the simplest way, *söyledi* ‘said’ is a witnessed form. Now let us discuss the clause *kardeşimi inek tekmelemiş* ‘a cow has kicked my brother’, the second part of (8b). The verb form is past and non-witnessed, termed *öğrenilen/-mİŞ’li geçmiş zaman geçmiş zaman* ‘reported past tense’. This means that the speaker ascribes to a third party the assertion that a cow kicked my brother, contrary to *Annem söyledi* ‘My mother said’ where the speaker personally witnessed the happening – that my mother told me something.

Let us now discuss the problematic (non-grammatical) sentence (8a). The two sentences in (8) are the same in their first part, hence let us focus on the second part, where the dependent clause (8a) contains not a past non-witnessed form, *tekmelemiş* ‘has kicked’, but a witnessed one, *tekmeledi* ‘kicked’. It is worth asking now whether it is possible for the non-grammaticality of (8a) to be due simply to the witnessed form *tekmeledi* ‘kicked’? Let us reason. The first part of the sentence contains a speaker who witnessed my mother’s saying something; the second part contains a speaker who witnessed the event of a cow kicking my brother. These two speakers ought to be one and the same person: sentence (8a) ought to have a single speaker, or at least the assertions in the two clauses ought to be non-controversial. A question arises: is there a controversy in that the speaker saying *Annem söyledi* ‘My mother said’ was a witness to what my mother said, and is also a witness to the event of a cow kicking my brother? There should **not** be a controversy: there are many similar sentences in which two witnessed forms enjoy a “happy co-existence” which does not trigger any non-grammaticality:

- (9) a. Annem gördü ki kardeşim Simge’yi öptü  
‘My mother saw that my brother kissed Simge’  
b. Hakim anladı ki tanık doğruyu söyledi  
‘The judge understood/realized that the witness told the truth’

Therefore, the non-grammaticality in (8a) clearly **does not** result from the mere presence of two witnessed verb forms. But if non-grammaticality is not due to the simultaneous presence of two witnessed verb forms, what is it due to then? The non-grammaticality can be explained (as in Kabakčiev 2018) in the following way.

If we take a sentence like (8a), in which the speaker personally witnessed that a cow kicked their brother, yet begins the sentence by reporting that their mother said this, a problem arises regarding what is actually being asserted. Why? Because when the speaker uses *Annem söyledi* ‘My mother said’ to report that their mother said a cow kicked their brother, it implies that the event may not have

occurred: relying on a third party's words inherently introduces uncertainty. When we report something on someone else's authority – whether it concerns past, present, or future events – there is always the possibility that it didn't happen, isn't happening, or won't happen.

Consequently, the proposition expressed by a sentence like (8a) appears to involve not just one speaker, as one might expect, but two. More than that, these two speakers actually contradict one another. The speaker in the main clause reports what their mother said – that a cow kicked their brother, while the speaker implied by the embedded witnessed form (*tekmeledi*, 'kicked') asserts that they themselves saw the event occur. This results in two competing interpretations: either the brother was indeed kicked by a cow, or he wasn't. But the ambiguity introduced by the matrix clause is resolved by the evidential in the embedded clause, which conveys direct witnessing and thus confirms that the brother was indeed, truly, kicked by a cow.

Thus, sentence (8a) contains not one but two speakers. The first one produces the main clause *Annem söyledi* 'My mother said'; the second one produces the embedded clause *kardeşimi bir inek tekmeledi* 'a cow kicked my brother'. Whom must we trust? It is logical to assume that, if the second speaker personally witnessed how a cow kicked my brother, this assertion ought to be believed. As for the first speaker, who saw or heard my mother saying that my brother was kicked by a cow but did not see how he was kicked, s/he ought to be treated as a ghost (fake, illegitimate) speaker. It can be taken for granted that a given meaningful sentence in a given natural language **must not host two speakers**. And especially in the – perhaps – unlikely or possible presence of two speakers, these two speakers must not be allowed to contradict themselves, as is the case here. Therefore, the Turkish sentence (8a) is deemed to be non-grammatical. Because it not only hosts two speakers, these two speakers **substantially contradict each other**.<sup>8</sup> The mystery of the non-grammaticality of sentences such as (8a) which reigned for many decades in Bulgarian grammar was revealed in Kabakčiev (2018). Soon after the discovery of the speaker ghosting phenomenon in Bulgarian it was found to exist in Montenegrin too – by Bulatovic (2018). The non-grammaticality of sentences such as (1a) is due to speaker ghosting, and more particularly to the presence in such sentences of two separate speakers contradicting each other: one in the matrix clause, the other in the embedded clause.

In some recent papers Kabakčiev (2020, 2022, 2023) pointed out the necessity for removing the witnessing feature of the aorist and imperfect grammemes, emphasizing that the major function of the perfect is the **elimination of witnessing**, not only in languages such as Bulgarian, in which witnessing is grammaticalized, but also in languages such as English, where it is the case that not only is witnessing **not grammaticalized**, it is generally considered in the literature – wrongly – **not to exist**. Thus elimination of witnessing is observed in Turkish sentences such as (4), whereby in (4a) there is non-grammaticality, which

---

<sup>8</sup>Sometimes there appear to be two speakers in one and the same sentence, as in *Yesterday Albena was sad, today she is joyful*. The status of the speaker/speakers in this type of sentences must be such that there are either two speakers present in two different temporal domains, one of which in the domain "yesterday", the other in the domain "today". Or there is only one speaker with a special capacity: capable of moving along the time axis from the location "yesterday" to the location "today". But in any case, without trying to decide which of the two variants is a correct one, the assertions of the two speakers or the two assertions of a single speaker must not contradict each other.

is, as a rule, eliminated by the perfect-like verb form *gelmiş* in (4b). Compare again the non-grammatical sentence (4a) and the grammatical (4b):

- (4) a. \*Petr söyledi ki Maria geldi  
 ‘Peter said that Maria arrived’  
 b. Petr söyledi ki Maria gelmiş  
 (literally) ‘Peter said that Maria has arrived’

Sentences such as (4a) with *verba dicendi*, non-grammatical, have as counterparts sentences such as (10a) in which non-grammaticality is triggered by the phrase *Petr’a göre* ‘according to Peter’ – and by similar phrases. The non-grammaticality is again eliminated by using a *-miş* verb form, see (10b):

- (10) a. \*Petr’a göre Maria geldi  
 ‘According to Peter, Maria arrived’  
 b. Petr’a göre Maria gelmiş  
 ‘According to Peter, Maria has arrived’

The non-grammaticality of sentences in Bulgarian such as (4a) and their normalization (grammaticalization) through (4b) are described in detail in Kabakčiev (2018) and Kabakčiev (2019, 2023). Following Kabakčiev’s (2020) analysis, it is reasonable to maintain that there is an interplay also between the perfect and the preterit in languages like English where the preterit serves to signify witnessing by default, while the perfect is a non-witnessed form in itself. In other words, there is an interplay between different grammatical categories and grammemes, and this interplay is a reason for their existence. A hypothesis could even be raised that this interplay does not exist in separate grammatical categories and grammemes in a certain language only (in certain languages) but is a general principle of the existence of grammatical categories and grammemes.

Kabakčiev’s (2020, 2022) thesis concerning the perfect, adhered to in this work, is that the present perfect has no own semantics at all: it exists and functions not in order to express something but in order *not to express something*, namely, witnessing. Thus it serves structural functions – that are residual and similar to those of grammatical gender and articles – *a, the*, zero article (Kabakčiev 2019). For gender and articles it is common knowledge that they possess no real (full-fledged) own semantics but serve structural functions.

In Turkish non-witnessing is realized by the *-miş* verb forms, hence these forms encode cancellability. In a similar observation made a long time ago, Kornfilt (1997: 337) argued that Turkish *-miş* forms signify that what the speaker says is either true or not true. Here are some more examples demonstrating the non-grammatical use of *-DI* forms in the *X said that* [content of *that*] semantico-syntactic schema and the correct use of *-miş* forms in this schema:

- (11) a. \*Öğretmenim söyledi ki Sinan bu sınavı kazandı  
 My teacher said that Sinan passed this exam  
 b. Öğretmenim söyledi ki Sinan bu sınavı kazanmış  
 (lit.) My teacher said that Sinan has passed this exam

The Turkish data in (11) and (12)–(13) below demonstrate once again the systematic contrast between *-DI* witnessed past tense forms and *-miş* non-witnessed/ reported past tense forms when embedded under verbs of saying and some similar ones. Just as in example (8), the contrast between the grammatical sentences with *-miş* and the non-grammatical sentences with *-DI* can be accounted for in terms of the speaker's status and the phenomenon of *speaker ghosting* (Kabakçiev 2018, 2019).

Sentence (11b) above is grammatical, while (11a) is not. In (11b), the verb *söyledi* 'said' is in the witnessed past (*-DI*), signaling that the speaker personally witnessed the act of the teacher saying something. The embedded clause, however, contains *kazanmış* 'has passed', a non-witnessed past (*-miş*). Here the speaker does not commit to having witnessed Sinan's success in the exam, but attributes this information to the teacher. Thus, there is a single speaker perspective consistently maintained: the speaker saw the act of saying, but does not assert personal witnessing of the exam outcome. By contrast, (11a) contains *kazandı* 'passed', a witnessed past form in the embedded clause. This construction implies that the speaker personally saw Sinan pass the exam. Yet the sentence is framed as a report of what the teacher said. Hence, two contradictory speaker perspectives emerge: (i) the speaker witnessed the teacher's saying something, and (ii) the speaker also witnessed Sinan's passing the exam, though the matrix clause presents this as knowledge mediated by the teacher. The two speaker roles cannot be reconciled, and thus the sentence is non-grammatical. This is a clear case of *speaker ghosting*: the embedded clause introduces a *ghost speaker* who contradicts the reporting frame.

A similar pattern is visible in (12):

- (12) a. \*Fatih inanmıyor ki Işıl gitti  
 Fatih does not believe that Işıl left  
 b. Fatih inanmıyor ki Işıl gitmiş  
 'Fatih does not believe that Işıl has left'

The correct variant is (12b), with *gitmiş* ('has left', non-witnessed). The matrix verb *inanmıyor* 'does not believe' marks the speaker's impression that Fatih does not believe something, yet, of course, this something might also be true. The embedded clause contains non-witnessed *gitmiş* which allows the perspective to remain consistent: the speaker reports Fatih's cognitive act, while attributing the content "Işıl has left" to Fatih's hesitation whether Işıl left or not without committing to having witnessed Işıl's departure. In (12a), conversely, the embedded verb *gitti* ('left', witnessed) conflicts with the reporting frame. The witnessed form signifies that the speaker personally saw Işıl leaving. The result is a contradiction: two speaker perspectives are present, one asserting that the speaker witnessed Işıl's departure, and the other implying that this knowledge is uncertain, derived through

Fatih's hesitation whether Işıl left or not. Again, the clash between the two speaker roles produces non-grammaticality.

A similar explanatory mechanism applies in (13):

- (13) a. \*Bildirildi ki yeşil araba kırmızı ışıkta geçti  
 'It was reported that the green car passed through the red light'  
 b. Bildirildi ki yeşil araba kırmızı ışıkta geçmiş  
 (lit.) 'It was reported that the green car has passed through the red light'

In (13b), the embedded clause contains *geçmiş* ('has passed', non-witnessed), aligning with the fact that the speaker did not witness the event of the car crossing the red light. Instead, the information is attributed to an act of reporting. The matrix verb *bildirildi* 'it was reported' is in *-DI*, witnessed, and represents a speaker's direct perception of a report about a car passing through red light. Sentence (13a), however, contains *geçti* ('passed', witnessed) in the embedded clause, which signifies that the speaker themselves saw the green car run the red light and not that a report stated the event. This conflicts with the framing: the sentence asserts that there was a report of a car passing through red light; the speaker covers the report but does not, and cannot, commit himself/herself to the truth or untruth of the report. As in the previous examples, the result contains two competing speaker perspectives – one, the report, witnessed by the speaker but not validating its truth, the other producing a *ghost speaker* effect and thus non-grammaticality.

Thus the data in (11)–(13) confirm the generalization established in (8): embedded clauses under verbs of saying plus some other verbs and syntactic structures require the use of the non-witnessed *-miş* past tense form. When a witnessed *-DI* form appears there instead, the sentence becomes non-grammatical because two different, competing speaker perspectives are introduced, one in the matrix and one in the embedded clause, and they contradict each other.

The phenomenon is explained through the mechanism of *speaker ghosting*: the presence of two speakers within a single sentence, one explicit and one implicit. Since natural language requires a consistent speaker perspective, such ghosting leads to non-grammaticality. The Turkish data here thus support Kabakčiev's (2018, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023) thesis that the primary function of the perfect is to *eliminate witnessing*. In languages where witnessing is grammaticalized, such as Turkish (with *-DI* vs. *-miş*), this elimination is directly observable in the contrast between grammatical and ungrammatical sentences like those in (11)–(13).

## Conclusion

The analysis carried out here of the non-grammaticality of sentences such as (1a), (4a), (5a), (8a), (10a), (11a), (12a) and (13a) shows that Turkish *-DI* verb forms represent non-cancellable content, which underlies the non-grammaticality of the sentences. Sentences of type (4b), (5b), (8b), (10b), (11b), (12b) and (13b) containing *-miş* forms are grammatical, because they have a reducible content with no internal contradiction, no *speaker ghosting* effect. As for the non-grammaticality of

sentences such as (8a), they contain witnessed forms that also feature non-cancellable content, and this enters into a contradiction with the requirement contained in the first clause in the *X said that* semantico-syntactic schema for the second part of the sentence (the *that* phrase) to contain cancellable content verb forms. But the major reason for the non-grammaticality of the Turkish sentences of type (8a) and for the non-grammaticality of other similar sentences can be defined as the presence in each of them of a *ghost speaker*.

The approach in linguistic writings – otherwise massive – according to which generalizations are made about *-mİş* forms expressing current relevance, resultativity and similar notions, is non-productive. If the expression of current relevance, resultativity and other similar notions were necessary for communication between people, all natural languages would feature present perfect verb forms. The fact is that there are hundreds of languages on the planet with no present perfect verb forms – and without any perfect verb forms at all.

It can be considered that the perfect and in particular the present perfect serves structural functions related to the lack of witnessing characteristic of the perfect and to the necessity to eliminate the non-grammaticality of certain types of sentences. The elimination of non-grammaticality of certain sentences is also related to the presence of the phenomenon of *speaker ghosting*, proved previously to exist in two languages only: Bulgarian and Montenegrin. Based on the analysis here, a conclusion is made that Modern Turkish, like Bulgarian and Montenegrin (see Kabakčiev 2018, 2023, Bulatović 2018), also features the phenomenon of *speaker ghosting*. It appears in certain non-grammatical sentence types that require grammaticalization, i.e., correction into an acceptable grammatical form, typically achieved through the use of *-mİş* forms. While this phenomenon is found in Turkish and in two other Balkan languages, its presence should not be labeled as some special feature of the Balkansprachbund. It may turn out that this phenomenon reflects a much broader tendency, possibly universal. Future research will need to determine whether the functions of the perfect, and those of the Turkish *-mİş* forms in particular – are central to this pattern, or whether some other, more fundamental cross-linguistic factors might also be at play.

It becomes clear that while in Bulgarian the use of the perfect is not merely possible but obligatory – in its absence non-grammaticality arises due to the phenomenon of *speaker ghosting*, and the same is true for Turkish. In both languages the perfect is **grammaticalized**, and in embedded clauses the use of perfect forms (*-mİş* in Turkish, the perfect in Bulgarian) is required. Failure to use them often results – in the relevant types of sentences, in contradiction between speaker perspectives, which lead to non-grammaticality. By contrast, perfect verb forms in Greek and English are not grammaticalized in this way. Their use in embedded clauses after *verba dicendi* is possible but not mandatory.<sup>9</sup> This is because in these languages the semantics of cancellability (*revocability*) can be coerced onto the dependent clause by the matrix clause (e.g., *I understand/hear that ...*) or by adverbials such as *probably* or *reportedly*, which require cancellability of the subordinate proposition. Since the

---

<sup>9</sup>In sentences with *verba dicendi* such as English *Peter said that Maria arrived* and its Greek equivalent *O Pétros eípe óti i María éftase*<sub>AOR</sub>, using the perfect is as good as using the past simple (in English) and the aorist (in Greek).

Greek aorist and imperfect and the English preterit are not grammatically marked for non-revocability, they can occur in embedded contexts without producing non-grammaticality.

All this confirms the hypothesis (see Kabakčiev 2022: 399) that while non-witnessedness and cancellability are grammaticalized values expressed through perfect forms in Bulgarian – and by extension in Turkish, in Greek and English they seem to be only pragmatically signaled and not systematically encoded. While witnessedness and non-revocability are not grammatically marked in Greek and the aorist and the imperfect merely imply them by default, in Bulgarian and Turkish they are ***an essential part of the grammar***: the simple past forms (-DI in Turkish, the aorist and the imperfect in Bulgarian) encode witnessedness directly, whereas the perfect (-mIş, *perfect periphrasis*) eliminates it. Thus, in Turkish – as in Bulgarian – the perfect serves as a grammaticalized means of ***eliminating witnessing and encoding cancellability***, while in Greek and English and in similar languages these values remain implicit, context-driven, non-grammaticalized.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to the team of ATINER for their professionalism, support, and impeccable organization. Their dedication to fostering an inspiring academic environment made the preparation and presentation of this work both productive and enriching. I am so thankful for their assistance and for everything.

## References

- Aarts et al. (1994) Aarts B, Chalker S & Weiner E. *The Oxford Dictionary of English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Aikhenvald A (2004) *Evidentiality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Aksu-Koç A (1988) *The acquisition of aspect and modality: the case of past reference in Turkish*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Androutopoulos I (2002) *Exploring Time, Tense and Aspect in Natural Language Database Interfaces*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Arslan-Kechriotis Z. Ceyda (2006) “Perfect” in Turkish. *Turkic Languages* 10, 246–270.
- Bulatović V (2018) Negramatičnost aorista u izričnim rečenicama u crnogorskom (Non-grammaticality of aorist in reporting dependent clauses in montenegrin language). *Lingua Montenegrina* XI/2(22), 3–13.
- Bybee et al. (1994) Bybee J, Perkins R & Pagliuca W. *The Evolution of Grammar. Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Cinque G (2001) A note on mood, modality, tense and aspect: affixes in Turkish. In: Erguvan-Taylan, Eser (ed.) 2001. *The verb in Turkish*. (Linguistik Aktuell/ Linguistics Today 44.) Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 47-59.
- Chomsky N (1957) *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Chomsky N (2015) *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press.

- Comrie B (1976) *Aspect: An introduction to the study of verbal aspect and related problems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Comrie B (1985) *Tense*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cysouw M (2011) Quantitative explorations of the world-wide distribution of rare characteristics, or: the exceptionality of northwestern European languages. Simon H J & Wiese H (eds.). *Expecting the unexpected: exceptions in grammar*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 411–431.
- Dahl Ö (1985a) *Tense and Aspect Systems*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dahl Ö (1985b) Areal tendencies in tense-aspect systems. Bertinetto P M et al. (eds.). *Temporal reference, aspect and actionality, Vol. 2: Typological perspectives*. Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 11–28.
- Dahl Ö (2000) The tense-aspect systems of European languages in a typological perspective. Dahl Ö (ed.). *Tense and aspect in the languages of Europe*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 3–25.
- Dahl Ö, Hedin E (2000) Current relevance and event reference. Dahl Ö (ed.). *Tense and aspect in the languages of Europe*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 385–402.
- Dimitrova D (2021) Aspect coercion in Greek aorist and perfect verb forms. *Studies in Greek Linguistics*, 41, 45–53.
- Dimitrova et al. (2025) *On the identicalness of some grammatical entities in Greek, Bulgarian and Georgian: triggered by language contact or not?* Paper read at the Third International Conference on Language Contact in the Balkans and Asia Minor. Thessaloniki: Institute of Modern Greek Studies. Retrieved from [https://ins.web.auth.gr/images/banners/PROG\\_RAM\\_2023.pdf](https://ins.web.auth.gr/images/banners/PROG_RAM_2023.pdf)
- Dmitriev N (1960) *Turetskiy yazyk* (Turkish language). Moscow: Eastern Literature Publishing House
- Downing A, Locke F (2002) *English Grammar: a university course*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Ediskun H (1999) *Türk Dilbilgisi* (Turkish grammar). İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.
- Elsness J (1997) *The Perfect and the Preterite in Contemporary and Earlier English*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Emre A (1945) *Türk Dilbilgisi* (Turkish grammar). İstanbul Cumhuriyet Matbaası
- Erguvanlı TE (1988) On the Expression of Temporal Reference in Subordinate Clauses in Turkish. In Koç S (ed.), *Studies on Turkish Linguistics*. Ankara: ODTÜ Yayınları, 333–351.
- Erguvanlı TE (1996) On the parameter of aspect in Turkish. In *Modern studies in Turkish linguistics: Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Turkish Linguistics*, ed. by A. Konrot, 153-168. Anadolu University Press: Eskisehir.
- Erguvanlı TE (1997) *Türkçede görünüş, zaman ve kiplik ilişkisi: {-DI} biçimbirimi* (*The Relationship between Aspect, Tense and Modality in Turkish: the Morpheme -DI*). In: Zeyrek, D & Ruhi, S (eds.) 1997. XI. Dilbilim kurultayz bildirileri, 22-23 Mayıs 1997. Ankara: ODTO
- Erguvanlı TE (2001) *On the relation between temporal/aspectual adverbs and the verb form in Turkish*. In: Erguvanlı Taylan, Eser (ed.) 2001. *The verb in Turkish*. (Linguistik Aktuell/Linguistics Today 44.) Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Erguvanlı TE (2011) *On the relation between temporal/aspectual adverbs and the verb form in Turkish*. *The Verb in Turkish*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. P. 97–128.
- Eul A (2008) *Tense, Aspect, Aktionsart and Related Areas Approaches to Analysing the Core Meaning of English Perfect Verb Forms*. PhD Dissertation. Koblenz-Landau University.
- Haspelmath M (2001) The European linguistic area: Standard Average European // Haspelmath M et al. (eds.). *Language typology and language universals*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1492–1510.

- Fenn P (1987) *A Semantic and Pragmatic Examination of the English Perfect*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Gencan N (1979) *Dilbilgisi* (Grammar). Ankara: Ayraç.
- Genish E (2008) *Grammatika turetskogo yazyka* (Turkish grammar). Vol. 2 Moscow: LKI.
- Göknel Y (2012) *Turkish Grammar. Academic Edition*. Istanbul: Vivatinell Bilim-Kültür Yayınları.
- Göksel A, Kerslake C (2005) *Turkish: A Comprehensive Grammar*. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York.
- Grice HP (1975/1989) Logic and conversation. Cole P, Morgan J (eds.), *Syntax and semantics III: Speech acts*. New York: Academic Press, 41–58.
- Grunina E (1976) *K istorii semanticheskogo razvitiya perfekta -mlş (On the history of the semantic development of the -mlş perfect)*. In: Sovetskaya turkologiya (Soviet Turkology) 1, Baku: Akademiya nauk.
- Gül D (2006). Basic Semantics of Turkish Evidential. In: *Proceedings of the International Conference on Turkish Linguistics (ICTL) 14*, 177–187.
- Hengirmen M (2006) *Türkçe Dilbilgisi* (Turkish grammar). Ankara: Engin.
- Holton et al. (1997) *Greek. A Comprehensive Grammar*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Huddleston R, Pullum G (2002) *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Iatridou et al. (2001) Iatridou S, Anagnostopoulou E & Izvorski R. Some observations about the form and meaning of the perfect. In: Kenstowicz M (ed.). *Ken Hale: A life in language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Izvorski R (1997). *The present perfect as an epistemic modal*. In: Lawson A (ed.). SALT VII, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 222–239.
- Johanson L (1971) *Aspekt im Türkischen*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Johanson L (1994) *Türkeitürkische Aspektotempora (Turkish Aspectotempora)*. In: Thieroff R & Ballweg J (eds.). *Tense systems in European languages*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag. 247–266.
- Johanson L (2000) *Viewpoint operators in European languages*. In: Dahl Ö (ed.) *Tense and aspect in the languages of Europe*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 27–187.
- Özsoy S, Taylan E (1993) “*Türkçe’de bazı kip biçimlerinin öğretimi üzerine*” (*On the teaching of certain modality forms in Turkish*). VIII. Dilbilim Kurultayı Bildirileri, Imer K & Uzun N (eds.). Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1–9.
- Kabakčiev K (2017) *An English grammar: main stumbling blocks for Bulgarians learning English*. Stuttgart: Mariana Kabakchiev Verlag.
- Kabakčiev K (2018) On non-grammaticality, “speaker ghosting”, and the raison d’être of English sequence of tenses (SOT). *Athens Journal of Philology* 5(3), 221–253.
- Kabakčiev K (2019) On the history of compositional aspect: vicissitudes, issues, prospects. *Athens Journal of Philology* 6(3), 201–224.
- Kabakčiev K (2020) On the raison d’être of the present perfect, with special reference to the English grammeme. *Athens Journal of Philology* 7(2), 125–146.
- Kabakčiev K (2022) *An attempt at unveiling the mystery of the present perfect – by analyzing it as a device to counterbalance the impact of other grammatical entities*. A.-M. Sougari & V. Bardzokas (eds), *Selected papers on theoretical and applied linguistics from ISTAL24*. Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 384–401.
- Kabakčiev K (2023) Speaker ghosting in Bulgarian revisited: on the scope of the phenomenon and the irreplaceability of perfects with renarratives. *Proglas* 32(2), 2023, 76–88.
- Kelepir M (2000) *Perfect constructions in Turkish*. MS, MIT.
- Klein W (1992) The present perfect puzzle. *Language* 68, 525–552.
- Kononov A (1956) *Grammatika sovremennogo turetskogo literaturnogo yazyka* (Grammar of the Modern Turkish literary language). Moscow-Leningrad: AN SSSR.

- Korkina E (1970) *Nakloneniya glagola v yakutskom yazyke* (Verb moods in the Yakut language). Moscow: Nauka.
- Korkmaz Z (2009) *Türkiye Türkçesi Grameri Şekil Bilgisi* (Turkish grammar: Morphology). Ankara: TDK.
- Kornfilt J (1997) *Turkish*. London: Routledge.
- Kuruoglu G (1986) Time reference in Turkish conditional sentences. In Proceedings of the National Conference on Turkish Linguistics, ed. by A. Aksu-Koc and E. Erguvanli-Taylan, 129-143. Bogazici University Publications: Istanbul.
- Kutsarova S (2025). An Attempt at Outlining the Major Features of Compositional Aspect in Modern Turkish. *Athens Journal of Philology*, 12(1), 49–74.
- Lewis G (1967) *Turkish Grammar*. Oxford University Press: Oxford
- Lindstedt J (1985) *On the Semantics of Tense and Aspect in Bulgarian*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- Lindstedt J (2000) The perfect – aspectual, temporal and evidential. Dahl Ö (ed.). *Tense and aspect in the languages of Europe*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 365–383.
- McCawley JD (1988) *The Syntactic Phenomena of English*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.
- McCoard R (1978) *The English Perfect: Tense-choice and pragmatic inferences*. Amsterdam: North-Holland.
- Moens M (1987) *Tense, Aspect and Temporal Reference*. PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh.
- Musan R (2002) *The German Perfect: its semantic composition and its interactions with temporal adverbials*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Pancheva R, Stechow A (2004) *On the present perfect puzzle*. – In: Moulton, K., M. Wolf (eds.). Proceedings of NELS 34, 469–484.
- Plungian VA (2016) *K tipologii perfekta v yazykah mira* (On the typology of the perfect in the languages of the world). Kazansky N (ed.) *Tiplogiya perfekta* (Typology of the perfect). Sankt Peterburg: Nauka, 7–36.
- Ritz ME (2012) *Perfect tense and aspect*. Binnick R I (ed.). The Oxford handbook of tense and aspect. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 882–907.
- Şener N (2011) *Semantics and Pragmatics of Evidentials in Turkish*. Doctoral Dissertation. <https://digitalcommons.lib.uconn.edu/dissertations/AAI3485418>
- Scheka Y (2007) *Prakticheskaya grammatika turetskogo yazyka* (Practical grammar of Turkish). Moscow: Vostok-Zapad.
- Slobin ID, Aksu-Koç A (1982) *Tense, aspect and modality in the use of the Turkish evidential*. Tense Aspect: Between Semantics and Pragmatics, Hopper P J (ed.). Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 185–201.
- Sorokin S (2003) *Kontsept perfektnosti v semantichnyi strukturi turets'kogo absentiv-perfakta. Kul'tura narodov Prichernomorya* (The concept of perfectness in the semantic structure of the Turkish absentive perfect. Simferopol: V. Vernadsky Taurida National University.
- Sorokin S (2017) *K voprosu o realizatsii semantiki rezul'tativnosti v turetskom yazyke: opyt funktsional'no-semanticheskogo issledovaniya* (On the issue of the realization of resultative and semantics in Turkish: an attempt at a functional and semantic investigation). Prof. Dr. Talat Tekin Hatıra Kitabı. *Uluslararası Türk Akademisi*, Vol. 2, 1029–1077.
- Swift L (1963) *A Reference Grammar of Modern Turkish*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Taylan E (1997) *Türkçe'de görünüş, zaman ve kiplik ilişkisi: -DI biçimibirim''* (The relation between tense, aspect and modality in Turkish: the morpheme -DI. XI. Dilbilim Kurultayı Bildirileri. Ankara: ODTÜ Eğitim Fakültesi Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü, 1–13.

- Taylan E (2000). *Semi-grammaticalized modality in Turkish*. Göksel A & Kerslake C (eds.) Studies on Turkish and Turkic languages: Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on Turkish linguistics. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 133–143.
- Telitsin N, Alieva K (2023). Perfect in the Old Uighur Language. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Asian and African Studies*, 15(2), 332–344. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu13.2023.207>.
- Thieroff R (2000) *On the areal distribution of tense-aspect categories in Europe*. Dahl Ö (ed.). Tense and aspect in the languages of Europe. Berlin: Mouton de Gryter, 265–305.
- Tosun G (1998) *The Split INFL Hypothesis in Turkish*. MA thesis, Bogaziçi University.
- Turkic Grammar (2002). Tenishev E R (ed.) *Sravnitel'no-istoricheskaja grammatika tyurkskih yazykov. Regional'nye konstruksii* (A comparative-historical grammar of the Turkic languages). Moskva: Nauka.
- Underhill R (1976). *Turkish grammar*. MIT Press.
- Yavas F (1980) *On the meaning of tense and aspect markers in Turkish*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas.
- Yavas F (1982) *The Turkish aorist*. *Glossa* 16.1: 40-53.
- Yao X (2024) *The Present Perfect and the Preterite in Late Modern and Contemporary English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. P.
- Yordanova M (2015) *Gramatichen minimum po turski ezik* (Turkish Grammar Essentials). Sofia: Sv. Kliment Ochridski.