

Western Mari conditionals and TAM clusters

(based on the Kuznetsovo dialect)

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Goal of this talk

In this presentation, my aim is to examine Aspect and Tense (and occasionally Mood) of Western Mari.

Roadmap

In doing so, I:

- base my observations on the Kuznetsovo dialect data;
- focus on verbal complexes in counterfactual conditionals;
- demonstrate available strategies to put together a counterfactual;
- propose analysis much along the lines of (Iatridou 2000), which states that what is observed in counterfactuals cross-linguistically is rather fake Aspect than real.

I conclude that in Kuznetsovo Western Mari counterfactuals, a similar role is played by fake Tense that serves to make differences regarding Aspect.

The relevant examples are drawn from own fieldwork data in the village of Kuznetsovo (Pözäknär), the republic of Mari El, in 2016-2017.

Western Mari 101

- Western (Hill) Mari < Mari < Uralic
- Spoken in the Mari El Republic (KB, Yaran dialects), ca. 30000 native speakers
- Case (Dependent marking)
- Subject agreement
- Basic word order: SOV
- Wh-in-situ
- Postpositions
- (Restricted) differential case marking contexts like DOM, NOM vs. GEN within PostPs

Conditionals available

Both indicative and counterfactual conditionals are available (but I will focus on the latter):

(1) Indicative:

lem kod-eš gän', mä tädä-m hër-äkt-enä.
soup remain-NPST.3SG if we it-ACC heat-CAUS-NPST.1PL

If there is some soup left, we will heat it up.

(2) Counterfactual:

äškal-vlä kok jal-la kašt-ät äł-gec-ä, nänä
cow-PL 2 foot-EQU walk-NPST.3PL be-COND-(NARR.)3SG they
edem-vlä gäc kužä-rak l'i-ät äł'ä / äłän.
person-PL from tall-COMP become-NPST.3PL be.NARR.3SG / be.PST.3SG

If cows walked on two hind legs, they would be taller than people.

Counterfactual makeup: the Mood aka êl-gec-ë

The highlighted thing is the dedicated form to produce a counterfactual in our dialect, located in protasis. Its makeup is pretty compositional, but... there is no dedicated COND mood elsewhere!

- (3) * kašt-gec-ëštä
walk-COND-3PL

No native speaker has recognized such a form.

Counterfactual makeup: the Mood aka *əl-gec-ə*

Also the verb form ***əl-gec-ə*** is invariable regardless of the main verb form:

- (4) mən' kerd-äm ***əl-gec-ə***, tol-am əl'ə
I can-NPST.1SG be-COND-(NARR.)3SG come-NPST.1SG be.NARR.3SG
/ əl'ən.
/ be.PST.3SG

If I could, I would come.

- (5) tən' kerd-ät ***əl-gec-ə***, tol-at əl'ə
you can-NPST.2SG be-COND-(NARR.)3SG come-NPST.2SG be.NARR.3SG
/ əl'ən.
/ be.PST.3SG

If you could, you would come.

- (6) mä kerd-ənä ***əl-gec-ə***, tol-əna əl'ə /
we can-NPST.1PL be-COND-(NARR.)3SG come-NPST.1PL be.NARR.3SG /
əl'ən.
be.PST.3SG

If we could, we would come.

- (7) ...

Counterfactual makeup: the Mood in the apodosis

Note that the same observation applies to the verb forms **əl'ə** / **ələn**!

- (8) mən' kerd-äm əl-gec-ä, tol-am əl'ə / ələn.
I can-NPST.1SG be-COND-(NARR.)3SG come-NPST.1SG be.NARR.3SG

/ be.PST.3SG

If I could, I would come.

- (9) tən' kerd-ät əl-gec-ä, tol-at əl'ə / ələn.
you can-NPST.2SG be-COND-(NARR.)3SG come-NPST.2SG be.NARR.3SG

/ be.PST.3SG

If you could, you would come.

- (10) mä kerd-änä əl-gec-ä, tol-äna əl'ə / ələn.
we can-NPST.1PL be-COND-(NARR.)3SG come-NPST.1PL be.NARR.3SG /

be.PST.3SG

If we could, we would come.

- (11) ...

The Mood: linear position in a clause

Also note that the Mood verb forms do not occupy any other position but the clause-final one. In principle, one could extract some material rightwards of it, but... the data are quirky and vary depending on native speakers. Overall, extraction is degraded:

- (12) mән' tән'-әм mond-en kerd-äm **әл-гес-ә**
I you-ACC forget-CVB can-NPST.1SG be-COND-(NARR.)3SG
(??tән'-әм), mән' pialән әл-em **әл'ә / әлән** (??pialән).
 I happily live-NPST.1SG be.NARR.3SG /

be.PST.3SG

If I could forget you, I would live happily.

The Mood in C^0

Based on these two observations, syntactically we can think of the Mood in both parts of counterfactuals as of an item undergone T-to-C movement.

More on the Mood

Another option is to replace our dedicated Mood verb form **əl-gec-ä** with the familiar **əl'ə / ələn**.

The particle "if", present in our indicative example, has to appear protasis-finally! (The verbal word order is rigid.)

(13) a. mən' ves xala-škê vanž-ən-äm əl'ə *(gən'), u
I.NOM another town-ILL relocate-PST-1SG be.NARR.3SG if new
täng-vlä-m voj-en-äm ^{?OK}ələn/^{OK}əl'ə.
friend-PL-ACC find-PST-1SG be.PST.3SG/be.NARR.3SG

b. mən' ves xala-škê vanž-ən-äm ələn *(gən'), u
I.NOM another town-ILL relocate-PST-1SG be.PST.3SG if new
täng-vlä-m voj-en-äm ^{OK}ələn/^{?OK}əl'ə.
friend-PL-ACC find-PST-1SG be.PST.3SG/be.NARR.3SG

Intended: 'If I relocated to another town, I would find new friends.'

More on the Mood

We have seen that "if" in clauses like (13ab) is obligatory. Also, the auxiliaries in the apodosis are not to be omitted. The result is immediate ungrammaticality (if we want to build a counterfactual).

Recall (13ab). The Mood verb forms were shown as interchangeable, but there is slight preference for the 'match'. That is, `be.NARR.3SG` in the protasis comes together with `be.NARR.3SG` in the apodosis. Same holds for `be.PST.3SG`.

We can think of it as some Agree (but subject to double-checking for 'mismatches'), where modal operators have to match w.r.t. a given feature (possibly modal bases (despite their restrictor assumption)?).

Tense

Unfortunately, the hypothesis about the difference between **ələn** and **əl'ə** with respect to temporality has not been confirmed.

If one would put the main verb (either in protasis or in apodosis) in NPST and vary the auxiliary only, there would not be systematic variation. The interpretation would remain the same. Recall (13ab) again, modified below (time adverbials comply with these results):

- (14) a. mən' ves xala-škə vanž-am əl'ə /
I.NOM another town-ILL relocate-NPST.1SG be.NARR.3SG /
ələn gən', u täng-vlä-m voj-am əl'ə.
be.PST.3SG if new friend-PL-ACC find-NPST.1SG be.NARR.3SG

If I relocated to another town, I would find new friends.

- b. mən' ves xala-škə vanž-am əl'ə gən', u
I.NOM another town-ILL relocate-NPST.1SG be.NARR.3SG if new
täng-vlä-m voj-am ələn/əl'ə.
friend-PL-ACC find-NPST.1SG be.PST.3SG/be.NARR.3SG

If I relocated to another town, I would find new friends.

Tense

The only distinct difference in counterfactual tense appears when the main verb in protasis is in PST and both auxiliaries are **əlîn**:

- (15) mən' ves xala-škê vanž-en-äm əlîn gən', u
I.NOM another town-ILL relocate-PST-1SG be.PST.3SG if new
täng-vlä-m voj-en-äm əlîn.
friend-PL-ACC find-PST-1SG be.PST.3SG

If I had relocated to another town, I would have found new friends.

Tense

This would mean that clauses within a counterfactual tend to Agree, **plus** that syntactic well-formedness does have semantic impact.

Besides, both parts — the Mood-related one and the Tense-related one — *play a role in this composition*.

This is potentially the way to differentiate between two non-frozen auxiliaries. (Although still subject to verification for all speakers available.)

Aspect

Aspect in conditionals demonstrates the split reminding of that in Russian:

- (16) a. maša šket-šö lem-äm šolt-a
Masha REFL-POSS.3SG soup-ACC cook-NPST.3SG
šl-gec-ä, to vadš kačkšš-äm šolt-en ak
be-COND-(NARR.)3SG, then evening food-ACC cook-CVB NEG.3SG
šoktš šlšn.
do.in.time be.PST.3SG

If Masha had been cooking soup alone, she would not prepare dinner in time. ↗ Result state of soup-cooking implied.

- b. maša šket-š-ok lem-äm šolt-en
Masha REFL-POSS.3SG-PTCL soup-ACC cook-PST.3SG
šl-gec-ä, (mä) ätäder-äm škeok mššk-šna
be-(NARR.)COND-3SG, we dishes-ACC REFL-PTCL wash-NPST.1PL
šlšn.
be.PST.3SG

If Masha had cooked soup alone, we would wash the dishes by ourselves. → Result state of soup-cooking implied.

Aspect

Note that there is no overt Aspect manifestation.

NPST and PST divide this labor, the former forcing imperfective, the latter perfective interpretation.

Composing counterfactuality

We ground our data within (Iatridou 2000)'s framework. So some definitions might be of help:

Future Less Vivid aka FLV

Assertion: the reader's favorite semantics for an FNV conditional 'if p, q'

Implicature: the actual world is more likely to become a $\neg p$ world than a p world

Why (our sampled) counterfactuals are FLV

- Unlikelihood
- Negation unaffectedness
- Future-oriented adverbials
- Future-oriented continuations

Unlikelihood

- (17) vas'ə piknik-əškə tol-ən əl-gec-ə, a mən'
Vasja picnic-ILL come-PST.3SG be-COND-(NARR.)3SG and I
#tumaj-em/^{OK}tumaj-en-əm, što tädə tol-eš, mä igväreš
think-NPST.1SG/think-PST-1SG that he come-NPST.3SG we together
šašlək-əm žär-enä əl'ə.
shish.kebab-ACC roast-PST.1PL be.NARR.3SG

Intended: "If Vasja came to the picnic (and I think he will), we would roast together shish kebabs." (Infelicitous instead)

Negation unaffectedness

- (18) tidë tör agël, što vas'ê piknik-äškë tol-ên
this true NEG.COP.3SG that Vasja picnic-ILL come-PST.3SG
êl-gec-ë, mä igväreš šašlêk-êm žär-enä
be-COND-(NARR.)3SG we together shish.kebab-ACC roast-PST.1PL
êl'ê.
be.NARR.3SG

Intended: "It is not true that if Vasja came to the picnic, we would roast together shish kebabs." → Vasja did not go to the picnic

Future-oriented adverbials

- (19) vas'ê piknik-äškë irgodêṃ tol-êṃ êl-gec-ë, mä
Vasja picnic-ILL tomorrow come-PST.3SG be-COND-(NARR.)3SG we
igväreš šašlêk-êṃ žär-enä êl'ê.
together shish.kebab-ACC roast-PST.1PL be.NARR.3SG
If Vasja came to the picnic tomorrow, we would roast together
shish kebabs.

Future-oriented continuations

- (20) kězät-ok likärc-ëm jü-ăș tängäl-ën âl-gec-ă,
now-PTCL medicine-ACC drink-INF begin-PST.3SG be-COND-(NARR.)3SG
jäle-räk tör-län-ă âl'â,
soon-COMP good-VBZ-NPST.3SG be.NARR.3SG but I know-NPST.1SG
što mä sarval-aș tängäl-ănă gän'ät, tädă likärc-ëm jü-ăș
that we demand-INF begin-NPST.1PL although he medicine-ACC drink-INF
otkaz-a.
refuse-NPST.3SG

If he took the medicine right now, he would soon feel better, but I know that even if we really demand that he take it, he will refuse to do so.

What PST does

Normally PST would abstract over times (t) with the following meaning: $T(t)$ excludes $C(t)$.

This would mean that topic times are excluded from utterance times.

In counterfactuals, PST operates over worlds (w), having virtually an identical meaning: $T(w)$ excludes $C(w)$.

In these contexts, topic worlds exclude speaker worlds. That is, the worlds of the antecedent exclude the actual world.

non-fake PST + T(w) excludes C(w)

Recall our past counterfactual example with be.PST.3SG in both parts of the counterfactual and the main verb in PST:

- (21) mən' ves xala-škê vanž-en-äm êlên gän', u
I.NOM another town-ILL relocate-PST-1SG be.PST.3SG if new
täng-vlä-m voj-en-äm êlên.
friend-PL-ACC find-PST-1SG be.PST.3SG

If I had relocated to another town, I would have found new friends.

Now we can conclude that for our past counterfactuals, the non-fake PST (the one in main verbs) does relocate the situation times further back in time, and the other layer (the one in auxiliaries) serves to contribute the 'counterfactual' meaning.

(This is reminiscent, I think, of Hungarian data. Am I making a mistake here?)

So far

- Aspect not really fake...
- ...rather coupled with Tense
- Main verb Tense is not fake...
- but auxiliary Tense is

Future issues

- Teasing Tense and Aspect apart
- Actionality properties of main verbs
- Different types of conditionals based on attachment level — w.r.t. counterfactuals
- Merge and Agree between protasis and apodosis
- Unification with indicatives

External links

Visit the expedition webpage for more details about the Kuznetsovo dialect of Western Mari:

<http://hillmari-exp.tilda.ws/>

Questions? Comments?

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