

Dialectal Synchrony and Diachronic Syntax: The Macedonian Perfect

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This paper will concern itself with the mechanism of the spread of the perfect using the auxiliary ima 'have' in Macedonian. It will show that this change has proceeded through syntactic constructions and grammatical categories rather than spreading at random, and that the evidence for this is to be found in synchronic dialectal phenomena, i.e. dialectal synchrony can be used to help recapitulate linguistic diachrony. For the sake of clarity, we shall assume that a perfect is a nonfinite verb form denoting the present result of a past action. Before continuing to the main discussion, however, it will be necessary to give a brief comment on the relationship between Macedonian and Old Church Slavonic (hereafter OCS) and a brief note on their verbal systems.

The arguments concerning the precise nature of OCS, the language of most of the earliest Slavic texts, do not affect the subject of this paper. A summary of the problems can be found in Lunt (1966:1-9). For our purposes, it is sufficient to say that OCS represents the ancestral language from which Macedonian is descended and that the problems of its exact dialectal classification are of no concern here. From a syntactic point of view, OCS can be viewed as the earliest recorded stage of Macedonian.

OCS had three simplex tense forms: present, aorist, and imperfect. It formed a perfect and pluperfect by means of the present and imperfect of byti 'to be', respectively, plus the past resultative participle, which was formed from the aorist. The one other OCS verb form of interest to us is the past passive participle, which denoted a state produced by prior action and occurred mainly in constructions with byti (Lunt 1966:139).

In modern literary Macedonian, the simplex tense forms all survive, although the aorist and imperfect are now marked for affirmative status. The past resultative participle has become the verbal 1-form and can be formed from both the aorist and imperfect. As in OCS, it occurs with both the present and imperfect of the auxiliary sum 'be', but while the latter construction is still a pluperfect, the former has become the unmarked past with the chief contextual variant meaning of nonaffirmative due to its opposition to the simplex pasts. The past passive participle, which could be formed only from transitive verbs in OCS, has become the verbal adjective in Macedonian and can be formed from any verb and used like any adjective.

In addition to its adjectival uses, the neuter form of the verbal adjective is used with the present, imperfect, and unmarked past (hereafter sum form) of ima to form a perfect, pluperfect, and reported perfect or nonaffirmative pluperfect. These forms will be referred to collectively as the ima perfect. The actual source

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constructions cannot occur with inanimate subjects (Kostov 1973:378).

The dialects of Yugoslav Macedonia north and east of the river Vardar have essentially the same characteristics with regard to ima perfects as the neighboring Bulgarian and Serbian dialects. Our present concern will be the isoglosses of acceptability which subdivide the area south and west of the Vardar. These isoglosses are directly related to the degree to which the ima perfect has replaced the sum forms, i.e. the old sum perfect. (In order to provide some geographic orientation, there is a map at the end of the paper.)

In the regions of Korça (Albanian Korçë) and Kostur (Greek Kastoriá), the ima perfect has completely replaced the sum forms except in a few isolated lexical items in folktales dialogue, whose archaic language is more resistant to change (Vukčević 1901:146; Mazon 1936:89,206; Vidoeski 1970:35; Šklifov 1973:95). In these regions, the verbal adjective has become the general verbal form used in all compound tenses and analytic constructions thus completely replacing the 1-form, i.e. the descendant of the old past resultative participle (cf. Belić 1935:228; Mazon and Vaillant 1938:233).

In the Ohrid-Struga region, the ima perfect and sum forms cover virtually the same semantic territory. In this region, as in Korça and Kostur, sentences using the ima perfects of the auxiliaries (ima bideno 'he has been'; ima imano 'he has had') are acceptable:

- (4) Imam bideno tamu
'I have been there' (Hendriks 1976:226)

This sentence would not be acceptable in regions to the north and east, e.g. Debar, Resen, and Bitola, because ima perfects of auxiliaries are unacceptable there. This fact is relevant to one of Benveniste's (1974:193) three principles of auxiliiation, viz. an auxiliary cannot be auxiliated. Although Benveniste states that he is limiting himself to French, the implications of the article are broader.³ The auxiliaries are more resistant to change in the system, as shown by the fact that these are the last verbs to form ima perfects.⁴

The following example would be accepted by speakers from both Ohrid-Struga and Bitola-Resen, but not by those from Prilep or Veles to the northeast:⁵

- (5) Vidov kako toj go imal napraveno toa
'I saw how/that he had done it'

The problem here centers on the nonaffirmative chief contextual variant meaning of the sum past mentioned earlier in this paper. This sentence was rejected by Prilep speakers because the nonaffirmativity of imal (3sg sum form of ima) in the highly marked perfect construction conflicted too strongly with the witnessed meaning of vidov 'I saw'. In Resen, however, the difference between ima perfect and sum form is weak enough to permit (5) to be accepted, at least as a pluperfect. In Bitola, the opposition affirmative/nonaffirmative

of these forms is not the concern of this paper. Regardless of whether the ima perfect resulted from internal development, a calque from some other Balkan language or languages, or a combination of these two factors, the fact remains that OCS had no ima perfect and modern Macedonian has one, and it is spreading from southwest to northeast in Vardar (Yugoslav) Macedonia and is more firmly established in the west than in the east in Aegean (Greek) Macedonia. The initial cause of the change may or may not have been native, but the structure of Macedonian was such that the construction could enter the language, and once it did so, only the rules of Macedonian grammar affected its further development. It is this further development which will be examined in this paper.¹

Constructions with ima are found in Serbian and Bulgarian as well as Macedonian, and a brief comparison of these phenomena is relevant to the discussion. The ima perfect is a relatively recent phenomenon; it originated no earlier than the seventeenth century (Reiter 1964:126; Koneski 1965:171). In the earliest attested examples, the construction is an analytic one in which the past passive participle agrees with the direct object, as in the following example from the Krnino MS (Kičevo region, 1706):

- (1) ... imam go aforesan i proklet ... (Koneski 1965:171)
'... I have excommunicated and cursed him ...'

This form is midway between a true perfect and an adjectival construction. Such forms can occur in Bulgarian and Serbian (Dimitrovski 1957:246):

- (2) On nema položen nijedan ispit (Serbian)
'He has not passed a single examination'
'He does not have a single exam passed'
(3) Toj ima dve nivi izoreni (Bulgarian)
'He has two fields plowed'
'He has two plowed fields'
'He has plowed two fields'

There are two crucial steps in the transition from analytic adjectival constructions with ima of the forgoing type to an unambiguous perfect. The first is the change from a participle agreeing with the direct object to an invariant form; the second is the extension of the construction to intransitive verbs. Both these changes occurred in Macedonian, but not in Bulgarian or Serbian.²

On the basis of textual evidence, it would appear that the formation of verbal adjectives from intransitive verbs predates the development of the true ima perfect by at least a century (Selišev 1933), but in all likelihood the invariant adjective perfect occurred first in transitives and then in intransitives. The situation in modern literary Bulgarian supports this view, for while forms of the type imam pisano 'I have written' are rare and substandard, a form such as *imam värveno 'I have gone' could not occur at all (Georgiev 1957:45). Another restriction in Bulgarian is that ima

In the extreme southwest, speakers are losing their feeling for the use of sum forms, and so they will accept almost any interchange of sum forms and ima perfects, but because the latter is replacing the former. Only in west central Macedonia (Prilep-Veles) is a consistent distinction made, such that (7) would sound inappropriate with a sum form because its contextual nonaffirmativity would make it sound unacceptable in such a marked first person context (i.e. with the proximate definite article -ov).

Having examined the synchronic facts of the ima perfect -- its related constructions and its isoglosses of acceptability -- it is now possible to examine the significance of these facts for diachronic syntax. There are four categories which represent four degrees of limitation on the occurrence of ima perfects: intransitive, animate, affirmative, and auxiliary. The perfect-like construction of Serbian and literary Bulgarian represents a development which has not yet passed the stage of being able to occur with intransitive verbs. In the southeast Bulgarian dialects of Thrace and Strandža, 'past passive participles' can be formed from intransitive verbs, e.g. vārven 'gone' dojden 'come', and these forms occur in ima constructions agreeing with their subjects (Gorov 1962:38; Kabasnov 1963:79). These dialects do not, however, have ima perfects with inanimate subjects. As indicated in footnote 2, the Thracian Bulgarian dialects border on the easternmost Macedonian dialects of northern Greece (the Strandža dialects are directly to the north and east of Thrace), and so these dialects can be said to represent the furthest extent of the Macedonian-type ima perfect. The next stage, the ability to occur with inanimate subjects, which co-occurs with the nonagreeing participle in all contexts, is found in all Macedonian ima perfects south and west of the Vardar.

In southwest Macedonia, the ima perfect can occur with transitive or intransitive verbs and with animate or inanimate subjects. The isoglosses subdividing this area are based on two factors: 1) whether or not the ima perfect of sum and ima is acceptable, and 2) how readily sum forms and ima perfects may be substituted for one another. Since it is known that the ima perfect originated in the southwest and spread north and east (v. footnote 1), the synchronic dialectal situation indicates the stages through which the ima perfect displaced the old sum perfect.

In the first stage in the development from OCS to Macedonian, the sum perfect expanded so that it could be used in any construction permitting a past tense form. Then the ima perfect came into existence while the old perfect developed the chief contextual meaning of nonaffirmative. This is still the case in Prilep-Veles, and evidence for its once having been the situation in Kostur and Korca as well is to be found in the fact that the isolated survivals of sum forms are admirative, i.e. a special marked form of nonaffirmative nonperfect (v. Mazon 1936:89,206; Friedman Forthcoming:Chapter 3). Such developments are found in many languages, and the roots of these changes in Macedonian go back to OCS (Wijk 1933; Vendryes 1937:89; Kuryłowicz 1956:29; Serebrenikov 1974:206). At this stage, it was still impermissible to form the new perfect with verbs which

does not exist (Koneski 1965:148), and so sum forms are readily substitutable for other kinds of pasts.

The competition of sum forms and ima perfects for the same semantic territory in the Prilep-Veles region has resulted in their clear differentiation for the time being: sum forms are unmarked pasts with a negative marking for affirmative status while ima perfects are marked for expressing a present or past resultative state. Even in this region, however, the two forms show evidence of confusion. Unlike the areas to the southwest, however, where the sum form is giving way to the ima perfect by losing its chief contextual variant meaning, precisely the opposite tendency is manifesting itself in Prilep, viz. the ima perfect is acquiring the nonaffirmative meaning of the sum form, as can be seen from interpretations of the following example:

(6) MARA: (koja ima staveno na sofrata leb, grne grav, lajci, i prazna zemjena panica sega ja stavi i pogacata ...) (Krie 1972:31)

'MARA: (who has put on the table plain bread, a pot of beans, spoons, and an empty earthenware dish now also sets out the round loaf of wheat bread ...)

This example comes from a set of stage directions in a play. The actions described have been taking place on stage during the course of the dialogue in preparation for a meal which will be eaten on stage. When confronted with this example, a number of Prilep informants assumed that the audience did not witness the setting of the table, but only the placing of the pogaca.

Aside from examples which are clearly acceptable or unacceptable in certain regions, there is the more subtle problem of degree of substitutability. The sum form can be substituted for an ima perfect in most contexts without any change of connotation. Since the ima perfect is not native to Skopje, the political capital and cultural center of Macedonia, there exists a literary subdialect which never uses it, the sum form being used instead (cf. Lunt 1952:100). Examples such as the following one could readily take sum form substitutes in the northeast and extreme southwest, but for entirely different reasons:

(7) Nožov me ima iseceno
'This here knife has cut me'

In the northeast, speakers have no feeling for the use of ima perfects because they do not use them natively, and so they will accept or reject the substitution of ima perfects by sum forms randomly. It remains to be seen what affects the spread of the literary language, which is based primarily on the dialects of Prilep, Bitola, and Veles, will have on new generations of speakers. At present, the youngest generation of college-educated speakers from the north and east use ima forms occasionally but do not have any feeling for the limits of their acceptability and do not use them very often.

exclusively in ima perfects (Koneski 1953:156).

5. Speakers with a fair acquaintance with the literary language, which is based primarily on the Prilep dialect, might reject the sentence due to literary influence.

6. On have as an intransitive v. Benveniste (1966:199).

7. There has also been a fixing of element order, but it involves too many factors to be discussed here.



MAP OF MACEDONIA

The territory of the ima perfect extends north as far as Gostivar, west to the Vardar, and includes all of Greek Macedonia. Thrace and Strandza are too far east to be shown.

served as auxiliaries, and in this sense the auxiliaries form a special class of intransitives more resistant to the new perfect than the other intransitives.⁶

The next development was the confusion of the old and new perfects. The Prilep reactions to example (6), where the ima perfect is associated with the sum form's contextual variant meaning, represents the first stage in this development. The second stage, as illustrated by examples (5) and (7), was the loss of any distinction between the sum form and the ima perfect aside from the restriction that the ima perfect cannot be formed from the auxiliaries. This stage is represented by the contemporary situation in the Bitola-Resen area. The third stage was the expansion of the ima perfects to auxiliaries, as is the case in Ohrid-Struga, and the final stage was the disappearance of the sum form, as happened in Korça and Kostur.

Of the types of syntactic change discussed by Closs (1965:412), the development of the Macedonian ima perfect involved the addition of a formant with the resultant change in class membership (the use of ima as an auxiliary) and the ultimate loss of a formant (the sum perfect). The road from one to the other lead through various stages of loss of context restriction for both the sum form and ima perfect.⁷ The sum form lost the restrictions of a perfect to become an unmarked past before disappearing, while the ima perfect went through stages of being restricted to transitives, then to sentences with animate subjects, then to contexts which were not the special property of the sum form by virtue of the latter's nonaffirmative chief contextual meaning, and finally the total loss of restriction, which involved the formation of ima perfects of the auxiliaries. Thus synchronic dialectology can provide data for diachronic syntax by means of such phenomena as the Macedonian isoglosses of acceptability, which indicate the stages the language went through in substituting one construction for another. This process proceeded through specific grammatical categories and syntactic constructions, not at random.

NOTES

1. Gallis (1960) summarizes most of the arguments regarding the origin of the ima perfect, but cf. Vukčević (1901:147), Mazon (1936:84), and Friedman (Forthcoming:Chapter 4).

2. It is true that transitive ima perfects with nonagreeing, neuter participles are said to occur in Thracian Bulgarian dialects (Kodov 1934:55). However, in this respect these dialects could represent continuations of the southeast Macedonian dialects of northern Greece rather than separate Bulgarian developments.

3. Benveniste's two other principles, viz. an auxiliary is impervious to diathesis, and it has a fixed place, both apply to Macedonian. In fact, the irreversibility is an important factor in distinguishing verbal forms from analytic constructions (Koneski 1967:458).

4. Borrowed verbs in -ira are also felt to be less appropriate for ima perfects, but they are frequently met with in the daily press. Verbal adjectives from iterative intransitives in -uva occur almost

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