

Future expressions in Ktunaxa

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This paper offers a preliminary analysis of two future expressions, *ɕxat* and *ɕ*, in Ktunaxa, a language isolate spoken in south-eastern British Columbia, northern Idaho and north-western Montana. Contrary to current literature on this language, I argue that these two expressions are separate and distinct. I demonstrate that they are modals and that their distinction is one of strong versus weak modality.

1 Introduction

There are two future markers in Ktunaxa, *ɕxat* [tsxal] and *ɕ* [ts], which may be similarly translated in the same context, as in (1) and (2).

Context: Said to a co-worker at the end of a work day

(1) Hu **ɕxa-t** ʔapx-nis-ne kanmijit
I **FUT-PRVB** see-2SG-INDIC tomorrow
'I will see you tomorrow.'

(2) Hu-ɕ ʔapx-nis-ne kanmijit
1SG-FUT see-2SG-INDIC tomorrow
'I'll see you tomorrow.'

These two future expressions have the same syntactic distribution. I will refer to them as preverbs, which are roughly comparable to English adverbs. This is because, as seen in (4) and (5), they both occur fifth in the verbal complex. This slot is the so-called preverb position, seen in (3), according to Dryer (2002, p.1):

(3) Verb Complex = (Early Particles) + (Subord) + (Pro) +
(Indic Proclitic) + (**Preverbs**) + Verb

(4) Hin **ɕxa-t** ʔunquqa-t ɕumni-kit-ni
2 **FUT-PRVB** head.to.center-PRVB sleep-2PL-INDIC
'You will sleep with your heads toward the center.' (Dryer 2002, p.7)

- (5) Hu- ϕ xa ϕ n-it ʔupit-ni
 1-FUT both-PRVB kill-INDIC
 ‘I will kill the both of them.’ (Dryer, 2002, p.16)

According to what little literature exists to date on Ktunaxa, ϕ is simply the shortened form of $\phi xa\phi$, such that the two preverbs have the same sets of meanings (cf. The Kootenay Culture Committee, 1991; Morgan, 1991; Dryer, 2002, 2007).

This paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I demonstrate that there is, in fact, a semantic difference between the two preverbs. In section 3, I give evidence against the potential hypothesis that ϕ marks proximate future, while $\phi xa\phi$ marks distant future. Section 4 will describe and give evidence for the modality of the two preverbs and for the proposal that one encodes weak modality while the other encodes strong modality, while Section 5 will conclude and outline further research.

2 The problem with current analyses

When the semantic distributions of these two future preverbs are investigated, it becomes clear that the expressions are not equivalent. Although either ϕ or $\phi xa\phi$ may be used to express the future, a distinction becomes evident when both forms are tested in identical contexts, as in (6) and (7), and in (8) and (9).

Context: You have hired some very reliable contractors to build your house. According to your contract, the house should be finished by next week, when you to visit the site.

- (6) $\phi xa\phi$ -I hukini ϕ -ni niʔi k-u ɬaxam
 FUT-PRVB finish-IND DEM SUB-1SG get.to.place
 ‘When I go there, the house will be finished (already).’
Speaker comments: Not as for sure as with ϕ .

- (7) ϕ hukini ϕ -ni niʔi k-u ɬaxam
 FUT finish-IND DEM SUB-1SG get.to.place
 ‘When I go there, the house will be finished (already).’
Speaker comments: “Positive; for sure for sure; you *know* they’ve been working on it and it’s definitely going to be done.”

Context: Your family is planning to have a picnic this afternoon. Your son asks you what the weather is supposed to be like.

- (8) $\phi xa\phi$ -I waɬuqkukut-ni
 FUT-PRVB rain-IND
 ‘It’s going to rain.’
Speaker comments: You heard it on the news or can see clouds.

- (9) ζ waʔuqkukut-ni
FUT rain-IND
 ‘It’s going to rain.’
Speaker comments: You’re more positive, as when you can see the rain approaching from a short distance.

If one preverb were merely the shortened form of the other, we would not expect these differences in meaning. This evidence that a distinction exists thus raises the question of whether the difference between them is one of tense or modality, which I will explore in the following sections.

3 Evidence against proximate versus distant futures

If the two forms marked tense, we might expect the difference to be proximate versus distant future, as this may explain the distinction seen in previous examples. This cannot be the case however, as both future forms may be used to refer to events that will happen in the immediate future, as seen in (10) and (11).

Context: You’re going to walk out the door in five minutes to meet your cousin

- (10) Hu- ζ **xa-t** ζ ’ina-t upx-ni ζ an
 1SG-**FUT-PRVB** go-PRVB meet-INDIC John
 ‘I will go meet John.’

- (11) Hu- ζ ζ ’ina-t upx-ni ζ an
 1SG-**FUT** go-PRVB meet-INDIC John
 ‘I will go meet John.’

As in (12) and (13), both forms may also be used when referring to an event that won’t happen for years.

- (12) Ka akniknamo ζ **xa-t** wax-i xa ζ anmijit-s
 My relative **FUT-PRVB** visit-INDIC four.years-OBV
 ‘My cousin will visit in four years.’
Speaker comments: The trip is still in planning stages.

- (13) Ka akniknamo- ζ wax-i xa ζ anmijit-s
 My relative-**FUT** visit-INDIC four.years-OBV
 ‘My cousin will visit in four years.’
Speaker comments: He’s already bought his ticket.

As further evidence against this hypothesis, the speaker often insists that there is no time frame associated with which form you choose. The difference between the two forms therefore cannot be one of proximate versus distant future.

4 The proposal

I argue that the difference between the two future markers is one of strong versus weak modality. ϵ is hypothesized to encode a strong epistemic future, while $\epsilon xa\text{t}$ encodes a weak epistemic future (cf. Celle, 2005).

4.1 Evidence for epistemic modality

Epistemic modality encodes a speaker's certainty about the proposition expressed by her utterance, based on prior knowledge or experience, but with incomplete perception, such that the speaker is able only to predict (Celle, 2005). If the preverbs encode epistemic modality, one would expect the evaluation time to be the utterance time, as is the case in (14) through (17).

Context: Your son is several hours late coming home from school, so you're starting to get worried. A friend assures you your son is probably fine.

- (14) $\epsilon xa\text{-t}$ k-sowsaqanimaṭ-ni $\epsilon a\text{?tmu-is}$
FUT-PRVB SUB-stay.with-IND male.friend-POSS
'He'll be with his friends.'
Speaker comments: You're saying he's probably there.

- (15) ϵ k-sowsaqanimaṭ-ni $\epsilon a\text{?tmu-is}$
FUT SUB-stay.with-IND male.friend-POSS
'He'll be with his friends.'
Speaker comments: You're sure that's where he is.

Context: Your friend is over for tea, when you hear someone loudly playing the drums in the basement. Your friend asks, "What is that racket?"

- (16) $\epsilon xa\text{-t}$ in-i ϵan
FUT-PRVB be.IND John
'That'll be John.'

- (17) ϵ in-i ϵan
FUT be.IND John
'That'll be John.'
Speaker comments: You're sure that it's him.

The difference thus looks like a contrast between weak and strong epistemic future. There are other contexts, however, where a distinction exists but epistemic modality does not appear to be a sufficient explanation. I describe these phenomena in Section 4.2.

4.2 Further evidence for modality

Copley (2002) outlines three conditions for a felicitous offering context: (1) only someone who can follow through with an offer can make one, (2) the hearer should be able to say no, and (3) there are temporal restrictions, in

that the antecedent and the consequent must have the same time of evaluation; that is, the time when the offeree wants the offer carried out must be the same time when the offerer is prepared and able to carry it out (p. 95-98).

It has been widely demonstrated cross-linguistically that only some future expressions are compatible with making an offer (cf. Copley, 2002; Matthewson, 2006; Glougie, 2007, 2008; Toews, 2010; etc.)

This same distinction holds in Ktunaxa, where *çxał* is felicitous as an offer, but *ç* is not:

Context: Your friend is hosting a potluck. The day before you are discussing who's bringing what. Knowing that she loves your red velvet cake, you offer to make and bring it.

- (18) hu-**çxa-ł** çinałki-ni kukçitikit
 1SG-FUT-PRVB bring-INDIC cake

'I'll bring the cake (if it's okay with you).'

Speaker comments: Can be contradicted, as in "no, she's bringing the cake, you can bring the fish."

- (19) #hu-**ç** çinałki-ni kukçitikit
 1SG-FUT bring-INDIC cake

'I'm bringing the cake.'

Speaker comments: This could only be said when you've already bought all the ingredients and everything's ready to go, so you're for sure bringing that cake; it wouldn't be an offer."

Following the proposed hypothesis, if *ç* encodes strong necessity, then it cannot function as an offer. In the utterance in (19), the hearer does not have the option of saying no; there is no implicit conditional clause, as in (18). Similarly, in the utterance in (21), because *ç* again does not contain an implicit conditional clause, such as "if you don't stop", it is not understood as a warning, but merely as fact, while (20) is perceived as a threat.

Context: Two friends get in an argument at a party and one threatens to leave

- (20) Hu **çxa- ł** ła ʔanaxaʔm-ni
 1SG FUT-PRVB again go.outside-INDIC

'I'll leave (unless you stop arguing)!'.

- (21) Hu **ç** ła ʔanaxaʔm-ni
 1SG FUT again go.outside-INDIC

'I'm going to go outside.'

Speaker comments: The use of *ç* isn't threatening like in (9).

These data show that Ktunaxa's future forms encode modal notions like planning, intention, and necessity in addition to epistemic modality.

5 Conclusion, further research and relevance

As demonstrated in the preceding sections, the future forms in Ktunaxa do not mark tense. This finding is consistent with the fact that Ktunaxa is not a language with obligatory tense marking. In (22), the utterance can be understood to mean that they went out hunting at some point in the past, or that they are going out hunting now, in the present¹, depending on the context.

- (22) ʔana-t ʔanam-ni
 go.out-PRVB hunt-IND
 ‘They went/are going out hunting.’

Instead, evidence has been provided to show that *ç* and *çxał* are modals. They encode strong (*ç*) and weak (*çxał*) modality. Specifically, there exists a distinction between strong and weak epistemic future.

In further research, it needs to be determined what other modal bases these two preverbs may express. Furthermore, I will investigate whether the future forms may encode aspectual meaning, following Copley’s (2002) analysis of English’s distinction between *will* and *be going to*. Also to be taken underway is the investigation of other possible expressions of the future in Ktunaxa, such as determining whether and how the future forms may be used with reference to past events.

Very little literature is available, to date, on Ktunaxa. The study of the future expression in this language isolate has, as of yet, been only cursory in nature. Furthering this area of study is thus valuable not only for Ktunaxa, but possibly also for Algonquian languages, which have been suggested to be aerially related, as well as for other languages, like English, that have multiple ways of expressing the future.

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¹ This utterance is not understood as describing a habitual action. The habitual marker, *ʔat* must be inserted, as in (i):

- (i) ʔat ʔanał ʔanam-ni
 HAB go.out-PRVB hunt-IND
 ‘They go out hunting (habitually).’

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