

On grammaticalization paths of Turkic postverb constructions

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In their 2002 *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization*, Bernd Heine and Tania Kuteva present lexical and grammatical units, labeled as “SOURCES,” which by grammaticalization have developed into grammaticalized or further grammaticalized items, “TARGETS.” These grammaticalization processes are illustrated with examples from several hundred languages of the world. Since Turkic languages display similar developments in various grammatical categories, the present paper aims to illustrate some of these grammaticalization processes by demonstrating the way that so-called “postverb” constructions in Turkic have participated in the creation of new aspect-tense markers.

In the following, I first will briefly describe some Turkic postverbs and their evolution. I then will proceed to a presentation of the SOURCES they go back to and the TARGETS they have resulted in.

Turkic postverb constructions

Turkic languages display verbal constructions consisting of a converb and an immediately following auxiliary verb, known as a “postverb.” While languages of the Indo-European type use preposed elements that precede the primary stem of a verb and form a lexical unit with it, Turkic languages use postposed elements, or postverbs. Turkic postverbs are functionally equivalent to Indo-European preverbal units in that they express actional modification of the preceding element.

Postverb constructions are based on a lexical element, in most cases represented by a syntactically subordinated converbial form and a following auxiliary element, the postverb.¹ The converbs involved belong to two different types: the *B* type ending in a labial stop and the *A* type ending in a vowel. These constructions are formally identical with syntactically free combinations of a converb and a following verb, i.e. combinations of two lexical items. In postverb constructions, only the first element is used as a lexical unit; the auxiliary element has lost parts of its lexical meaning due to desemanticization and is not expandable according to its original argument structure, whereas the converbial element remains so since the former has adopted the actancy pattern of the latter. Postverb constructions are grammaticalized single lexical units where information on mood, tense and aspect, person and number is carried by the auxiliary element. The semantic relation between postverb and lexical verb can be symbolized as follows:

lexical verb-B \Leftarrow postverb

lexical verb-A \Leftarrow postverb

¹ However, there are paratactic constructions where both lexical element and auxiliary element have the same suffixes. Most descriptions agree that the paratactic type has the same meaning as the respective hypotactic type, but this claim has still to be proven by a thorough investigation of these constructions.

Examples from some Turkic languages are:

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|---|---|
| <p>(1) Uzbek
 <i>yâz-ă</i> <i>yat-</i>
 write-CONV lie.AUX
 ‘be writing’
 (lit.: ‘writing lie’)</p> | <p>(2) <i>yâz-ip</i> <i>otur-</i>
 write-CONV sit.AUX
 ‘write for a while’
 (lit.: ‘writing sit’)</p> |
| <p>(3) <i>yâz-ip</i> <i>tur-</i>
 write-CONV stand.AUX
 ‘write regularly, permanently’
 (lit.: ‘writing stand’)</p> | |
| <p>(4) Khakas
 <i>xal-îp</i> <i>odîr-</i>
 remain-CONV sit.AUX
 ‘remain (for a long time)’
 (lit.: ‘remaining sit’)</p> | <p>(5) Dukhan
 <i>jîi-p</i> <i>olur-</i>
 eat-CONV sit.AUX
 ‘be eating’ (lit.: ‘eating sit’)</p> |

As already mentioned, postverbs operate on the actional content of the preceding lexical element. This has the effect that the modification structure typical for Turkic syntax, i.e. modification from left to right, is reversed. The constructions dealt with here adopted the modification structure observable in Turkic words where bound items attached at the right-hand side modify the preceding items (cf. Johanson 1973: 104-105).

Grammaticalized notions expressed by postverbs are of the following types (among others). In an actional modification, postverbs can modify the actional content of the lexical verb by specifying its qualitative or quantitative properties of different modes of action such as suddenness (6) and thoroughness (7), as in the following examples:

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|---|---|
| <p>(6) Karachay
 <i>ayt-îp</i> <i>qoy-</i>
 say-CONV put.AUX
 ‘blurt out’
 (lit.: ‘saying put’)</p> | <p>(7) Uyghur
 <i>oqu-p</i> <i>çîq-</i>
 read-CONV emerge.AUX
 ‘read from beginning to end’
 (lit.: ‘reading emerge’)</p> |
|---|---|

In the Karachay example, the focus is on how something is said, whereas *çîq-* ‘emerge’ in the Uyghur example excludes readings like ‘read for a while’ or ‘start reading’.

Another grammaticalized notion is phase specification. In this, one inherent phase of the actional phrase can be expressed by postverbs that focus on the initial, the statal or the final phase (for the phase structure of Turkic actional phrases, see below):

- (8) Turkish
yaz-ip *dur-*
 write-CONV stand.AUX
 ‘write permanently, repeatedly’ (lit.: ‘writing stand’)

In this example, *dur-* focuses on the statal phase of the actional phrase, excluding readings like ‘start reading’, ‘read through’, etc.

Very often, the grammaticalized notion has derived from the original lexical meaning of the postverb.

The inventory of Turkic postverbs is not restricted to the examples given so far. The following kinds of verbs (with different variants) can occur as the auxiliary element in postverb constructions: postural verbs like *tur-/dur-* ‘stand, stand up, stand upright’, *yat-/jat-/çat-* ‘lie down, lie’, *otur-/otur-/odır-* ‘sit down, sit’; motion verbs like *kel-/kil-/gel-* ‘come’, *ket-/git-* ‘go’, *bar-* ‘go’, *yorı-* ‘move’; and other verbs like *al-* ‘take’, *ber-/bir-/ver-* ‘give’, *id-* ‘send’, etc.

It already has been mentioned that postverb constructions have developed from syntactically free combinations of a converb and a following lexical verb. In converb clauses based on converbs of the *B* type, the converb element is syntactically subordinated to the following verb sharing the same first actant (subject) with it.² At this level, the converb element functions as the predicative core of the converb clause. Semantically, the converb element can have a narrative value equal to that of the second element, the matrix clause predicate. Although the converb clause is embedded into the matrix clause, the relation between the two clauses can be characterized semantically as a kind of “‘and’-relation” (cf. Johanson 1996: 96), similar to the semantic function of conjunctions such as ‘and’ in European languages.³ Some examples are:

(9) Old Turkic (8th century)

Toquz oγuz bodun yer-ın
Toquz Oghuz people land-POSS.ACC

sub-ın id-ıp tabγač-γaru bar-dı
water-POSS.ACC leave-CONV China-DIR go-PST.3SG
‘The Toquz-Oghuz people left their land and went toward China’.
(lit.: ‘The Toquz-Oghuz people left their land and their water
and went toward China’)

(10) Turkish

Soyguncu herkes-i yer-e
Robber everybody-ACC floor-DAT

yat-ır-ıp para-ları-nı al-dı.
lie down-CAUS-CONV money-POSS.3PL-ACC take-PST.3SG
‘The robber forced everybody to lie down on the floor and took their money’.

Converb clauses of this type, or, more specifically, converbs in *B* have a propulsive (“plot-advancing”) meaning rather than a modifying one and used to be one of the most important

² Turkic languages also have converb constructions where both elements have different first actants, cf. Johanson (1995b).

³ For an overview on types of Turkic converb clauses, see Johanson (1995b).

means to chain several events of narrative sequences to each other (cf. Johanson 1998b: 64-65).⁴ In the history of Turkic, this converb, as we shall see below, has been involved in the renewal of aspect-tense categories.

Converb clauses based on the converb ending in a vowel, here represented as *A*, are used much less frequently than those based on *B*. Converbs of this kind, too, have been involved in the creation of new aspect-tense markers. Originally, though, this converb appeared as the predicative core in a subordinated converb clause with a modifying function. This is the case in older stages of Turkic (cf. Schulz 1978: 156-168) as well as in modern Turkic languages. In the following examples, the converb clauses give circumstantial information on the event expressed by the matrix clause predicate. The verbal stem to which it is attached often occurs reduplicated. Examples include the following:

- (11) Old Anatolian Turkish (16th century):
ayla-ş-u *ayla-ş-u* *jumla* *qayyu-lu*
 cry-REC-CONV cry-REC-CONV all sorrow-DER.with
 ‘They are all sorrowful crying permanently’.
- (12) Modern Uyghur:
yaz-a *yaz-a* *qol-um* *tal-di*
 write-CONV write-CONV hand-POSS.1SG become tired-PST.3SG
 ‘My hand became tired because of writing permanently’.

In some cases, the converb suffix is attached to two verbs with similar or opposite meanings forming a single lexical unit, as in the following examples:

- (13) Turkmen (Clark 1998: 357):
Olor *otur-o-tur-o*
 They sit-CONV stand-CONV

ö:ð *bar-malī* *yer-i-ne* *bardılar*
 self go-OBL place-POSS.3SG-DAT go-PST.3SG
 ‘They calmly arrived at the places they were supposed to go’
 (lit.: ‘Sitting and standing they arrived...’)
- (14) Turkish:
Düş-e *kalk-a* *buraya* *gel-dik.*
 fall-CONV stand up-CONV here come-PST.1PL
 ‘After many struggles we reached this state’.
 (lit.: ‘falling down and standing up [again and again] we arrived here’)

⁴ This use has decreased in some modern Turkic languages, e.g. in Turkish where its function has been taken over partly by the converb *-(y)ArAk*.

The converb in *A* has an intraterminal value, which had an effect on the further developments it was involved in, see below.

Although the two types of converbs presented here have different functions, they have undergone similar changes in the field of verbal composition. Frequent collocation and extension of their use to more general contexts have led to desemanticization of certain verbs which were the predicative cores of the respective matrix clause the converb clauses were embedded in. This has caused a stronger semantic fusion between the two elements, which now occur as a single lexical unit with the second element, the postverb, describing the event expressed by the converb in a more accurate way. The fusion is so strong that—except for the particle *da/de* ‘and’—nothing can be placed between the lexical element and the auxiliary. A selection of examples from earlier and later stages of Turkic languages as well as from modern languages is given in the appendix at the end of this paper.

Postverbs seem to have replaced the old synthetic actionality markers which were used in older varieties of Turkic and which have survived in a few cases. But, in later stages, these analytical units, in their turn, have been exposed to general tendencies such as increase of agglutination up to suffixation of the elements involved; note the case of the Khakas suffix *-IbIS* which has developed from *B + is-* ‘send’. However, it should be noted that most postverbs have not (yet?) reached the stage of suffixation. Again in Khakas, even phonetic reduction—another step on the grammaticalization path—has taken place: the suffix of the *B*-converb is reduced to Ø in some cases, e.g. in *pas sal-* (< *pasip sal-*) ‘write down’.

As is accepted usually in grammaticalization theory, several stages of grammaticalization can be observed at the same time. Thus, in nearly all attested stages of Turkic languages, combinations of converbs and immediately following lexical verbs can represent a non-grammaticalized stage (examples (9)-(14) above) and display grammaticalized meaning in the sense focused on in this section.

SOURCE > TARGET developments in Turkic languages

We shall now turn to the SOURCES and TARGETS presented in Heine & Kuteva (2002). The SOURCES to be illustrated are LIE ‘lie (down)’, SIT, and STAND ‘stand up, stand’. In the languages investigated by Heine & Kuteva (2002), these SOURCES—among others—have developed into a TARGET labeled as “CONTINUOUS” with the meanings ‘be doing sth.’ and ‘keep on doing sth.’. This grammatical label is defined as a “marker for an event that is in progress at reference time” (Heine & Kuteva 2002: 19). Because Turkic postverbs fulfill this task perfectly, we shall concentrate on some cases covered by the label CONTINUOUS.

Turkic representatives of the SOURCES mentioned here are the following postverbs:

- LIE: *yat-* ‘lie down, lie’
- SIT: *ol(t)ur-* ‘sit down, sit’
- STAND: *tur-* ‘stand upright, stand still’

Any of these postverbs can express meanings of continuity, durativity, etc. Other notions such as iterativity or habituality can be expressed by these postverbs as well and therefore are considered here, too.

The grammaticalized notion of continuation, i.e. Heine & Kuteva's grammatical concept *CONTINUOUS*, in the Turkic material is based on the fact that the verbs *yat-*, *ol(t)ur-* and *tur-* are so-called initio-transformative verbs and have two inherent phases: an initial and a following statal one. With initio-transformatives the crucial limit is the initial one; the transformation takes place with the transgression of this limit. With fini-transformatives, the crucial limit is the final one. The action expressed by verbs of this kind cannot take place until this final limit is attained. Non-transformatives do not have a crucial initial or a final limit. The events they describe have natural limits; if a relevant limit has to be determined, it is the initial one.

Postverb constructions based on the verbs mentioned above focus on the statal phase of the respective lexical verb. The initial transformative phase has already been transgressed and is not envisaged. The constructions operate on the basic actional content of the lexical item and render different kinds of durative readings for the actional phrase. Postverbs of this kind have thus a non-transformativizing function, excluding limit-oriented readings, cf. the Uzbek examples (1)-(3), repeated here for the sake of convenience, where a reading 'start writing' is not possible:

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| (1) <i>yâz-ă</i>
write-CONV
'be writing' | <i>yat-</i>
lie.AUX | (2) <i>yâz-ip</i>
write-CONV | <i>otur-</i>
sit.AUX
'write for a while' |
| (3) <i>yâz-ip</i>
write-CONV | <i>tur-</i>
stand.AUX
'write regularly, permanently' | | |

Another type of Turkic postverb constructions is based on the verb *yori-* 'move'. Although I could not find any *SOURCE* label in Heine & Kuteva (2002) that could cover the function of this postverb, I included it in this paper because it has undergone a further grammaticalization similar to the postverbs presented above. This postverb denotes durative and continuous meanings as well; e.g.:

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|--|---|
| (15) Dukhan
<i>o''tta-p</i>
graze-CONV | <i>jor-</i>
move.AUX
'be grazing' |
|--|---|

Further grammaticalization into aspecto-temporal markers

Renewal of high focal intraterminality

Heine & Kuteva (2002) also include further grammaticalization of already grammatical(ized) items into their lexicon (cf. Heine & Kuteva 2002: 4).

The grammatical concept CONTINUOUS, thus, can function as a base for the creation of HABITUALS and PRESENTS (Heine & Kuteva 2002: 93-94). Here, I will concentrate on the latter case, enlarging the concept by the property “progressive.”

The postverbs mentioned so far have taken part in the formation of new aspectual markers in that they were reinterpreted in more general contexts and finally became markers of this kind.

Before I give some examples that illustrate the developments in question, some information on the terminology used here seems to be appropriate.

The aspectual markers dealt with here belong to viewpoint categories presented in a model by Johanson (2000). Viewpoint operators relate the events expressed by a predication to some orientation point. The relation is based on three types of aspectual terminality:

- intraterminality: viewing the event within its relevant limits (*intra terminos*)
- postterminality: viewing the event after the transgression of its relevant limit
(*post terminum*)
- adterminality: viewing the event at the very attainment of its relevant limit
(*ad terminum*)

The third type of aspectual terminality—adterminality—does not occur in Turkic languages, whereas it is a very important feature in, e.g., Slavic languages.

Intraterminality and postterminality can be further characterized by degrees of higher and lower focality referring to the orientation point.

Combinations based on *-A tur-*, with the aorist form *-A turur*, have created a new or “progressive” category of high focality with respect to a given aspectual orientation point; cf. the following examples:

- (16) Chaghatay (15th-16th centuries):
šahar-da bir qul sat-a dur-lar bu dām
 town-LOC one slave sell-INTRA.3PL DEM moment
 ‘They are selling a slave in town now’
- (17) Old Anatolian Turkish (15th century):
Murād Xan gāl-i yoru-r
 Murād Xan come-INTRA.1SG
 ‘Murād Xan is coming’

Combinations based on *-B tur-* have undergone similar changes leading to the renewal of “resultative” aspect categories with high focality (see below). In some languages, however, these combinations have come to express high focal intraterminality as well. In the following Tuvan example, the former aorist *turur* occurs in the reduced form *tur*:

- (18) *Süt xayn-īp tur*
 milk boil-INTRA.3SG
 ‘The milk is boiling’

In the South Siberian Turkic languages, to which Tuvan belongs, the postverbs *yat-* and *ol(t)ur-* have contributed to the renewal of high focal intraterminality as well, as in the following example from Khakas:

- (19) *KİR-İp odİR*
 enter-INTRA.3SG
 ‘is entering, enters’

In Turkish of Turkey, the first renewal of high focality has been performed with the verb *yorİ-*, where the combination *-A yorİ-* has developed into the high focal marker *-(I)yor-* (20). Today, this form marks lower degrees of focality as well; see example (21) which has both high and low focal interpretations:

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|--|--|
| <p>(20) <i>Ali gel-iyor</i>
 Ali come-INTRA.3SG
 ‘Ali is coming’</p> | <p>(21) <i>Ali sigara iç-iyor</i>
 Ali smoke-INTRA.3SG
 ‘Ali is smoking, smokes’</p> |
|--|--|

Second renewal of high focal intraterminality

In Kipchak languages such as Kazakh and Kirghiz, the high focal items based on *-A turur* became elements of lower focality and thus prepared the ground for new elements to express high focality with intraterminal viewpoints. Again, it was a combination based on *-A tur-*, enlarged as *-A tura turur* that filled in this gap. Today, this marker often occurs in a reduced form; for example:

- (22) Kazakh
al-a turadİ
 take-INTRA.3SG
 ‘is taking’

Renewal of high focal postterminality

The combination *-B tur-* has contributed to the creation of new high focal postterminal viewpoint aspects of the resultative—or “perfect”—type. This stage can be observed in most Turkic languages, the aspectual marker often having been reduced in shape; e.g.:

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|--|---|
| <p>(23) Turkmen
 <i>Al-İpdir</i>
 take-POST.3SG
 ‘(S)he has taken’</p> | <p>(24) Azerbaijanian
 <i>Al-İp</i>
 take-POST.3SG
 ‘(S)he has taken’</p> |
|--|---|

Second renewal of high focal postterminality

Some languages display a further development in which the *-B tur-* complexes have been enlarged by the same periphrasis as the already mentioned *-A tur-* complexes. The complex *-B tura turur* functions today, mainly in Turkic languages of the Kipchak type, as a marker of high focal postterminality, focusing on the postterminal state of the actional phrase “being in the state of having done sth.”; e.g.:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (25) Karachay
<i>Ket-ip turadı</i>
go-POST.3SG
‘(S)he is gone’ | (26) Kumyk
<i>Gel-ip turaman</i>
come-POST.1SG
‘I have arrived’ |
|---|--|

In the last example, again, reduction in the phonetic shape of the aspectual markers can be observed. Formal erosion often is correlated with decrease of the focality degree of aspectual markers. In written texts, the co-existence and the formal identity of the aspectual markers briefly presented here and the postverb constructions they have derived from can lead to misunderstandings of these forms. Thus, a *B tur-* complex—at first sight—can be ambiguous in its function. In these cases, intonational conventions can help disambiguate the functions in question.⁵

Final remarks

There is much more to say about Turkic postverb constructions, their distribution in Turkic languages, their further grammaticalization paths, contact and areal phenomena, etc. These issues, to a certain extent, are dealt with in the works given in the reference list. The above lines are an attempt to give some basic insight into certain categories which may differ formally from their equivalents in other languages, while sharing much of their functional development with them.

Abbreviations

1PL	1st person plural	2PL	2nd person plural
3PL	3rd person plural	1SG	1st person singular
3SG	3rd person singular	ABL	ablative
ACC	accusative	ANT	anterior
AUX	auxiliary	CAUS	causative
CONV	converb	COP	copula
DAT	dative	DEM	demonstrative pronoun
DER	derivational suffix	DIR	directive
INTRA	intraterminal	LOC	locative

⁵ This phenomenon in a Turkish dialect has been dealt with by Demir (1993).

OBL	obligation	OPT	optative
PL	plural	POSS	possessive
POSS.ACC	accusative of the possessive stem	POST	postterminal
POSTP	postposition meaning	PRIV	privative suffix
PST	past	REC	reciprocal
SG	singular		

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Appendix

A bar- ‘go’ denoting completion:

Old Turkic (8th century):

türk bodun at-ï yoq bol-u bar-mïġ är-ti
 Türk people name-POSS.3SG vanish-CONV go.AUX-ANT-3SG
 ‘The name of the Türk people had vanished’

B bar- indicating direction (‘away from’)

Chaghatay (16th century):

at-ï-nï oqla-dim, yumalan-ïp bar-dï
 horse-POSS.3SG-ACC shoot-PST.1SG roll-CONV go.AUX-PST.3SG
 ‘I shot his horse and it rolled away’

or a gradually developing action:

Uzbek:

yaġşilan-ïp bâr-
 get better-CONV go.AUX
 ‘get better and better’

B git- ‘go’ expressing nuances of finality/completion:

Turkish:

yit-ïp git-
 be lost-CONV go.AUX
 ‘disappear (completely, entirely)’

or duration/continuation:

Turkish (Baykurt 1979: 15):

... *korku-suz, ürkü-süz gün-ler geç-ïp gid-iyor-du.*
 fear-PRIV panic-PRIV day-PL pass-CONV go.AUX-INTRA-PST.3.SG
 ‘... days without fear and panic passed’

A kel- ‘come’ indicating an event lasting from an earlier stage:

Chaghatay (16th century):

bu vilāyat-lar qadīm-din Türk-kä bol-a kel-gän dur
 DEM province-PL ancient time-ABL Turk-DAT be-CONV come.AUX-POST.3SG
 ‘these provinces have belonged to the Turks for ages’

B kel- expressing continuation:

Kirghiz:

Bir neče jıl-dan beri joldoš bol-up kel-dik
 many year-ABL POSTP.since friend be-CONV come.AUX-PST.2PL
 ‘We have been friends for a number of years’

A id- ‘send, release’ denoting completion:

Old Turkic (8th century)

türk bodun illä-dük il-ın ičyın-u idmiš,
 Türk people state-DER.with-part state-POSS.ACC lose-CONV send.AUX-ANT.3SG

qayan-la-duq qayan-ın yitür-ü idmiš
 qayan-DER.with-PART qayan-POSS.ACC lose-CONV send.AUX-ANT.3SG
 ‘The Türk people let their state which they had founded completely disappear
 and they lost their qayan whom they had made their ruler’

B yubâr- ‘send’ expressing suddenness and completion:

Uzbek:

Hamma bâla-lar birdan qičqir-ib yubâr-dilar
 all child-PL at once shout-CONV send.AUX-PST.3PL
 ‘All children shouted at once’

A al- ‘take, seize’ denoting ability/possibility:

Khorezmian (14th century)

... bahām-ni kim ber-ä al-γay är-di?
 price-POSS.1SG-ACC who give-CONV take.AUX-OPT COP-PST.3SG
 ‘... who could afford my price?’ (lit.: ‘... who would be able to give my price?’)

Bashkir:

Uqı-y al-diğ
 read-CONV take.AUX-PST.1PL
 ‘We could read’

B al- expressing subject version:

Tuvan:
Biž-ip al-dim
write-CONV take.AUX-PST.1SG
'I wrote it down (to my own benefit)'

B ber- 'give' expressing object version:

Uyghur:
Hikeye eyt-ip ber-dim
story tell-CONV give.AUX-PST.1SG
'I told a story (to the benefit of others)'