The diachronic expansion of perfective constructions in Kazakh

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The literature has been fascinated by the complicated system of tense-aspect-modality expressions found in Kazakh (e.g. Abish, 2014; Akbaba, 2011; Győrfi, 2022; Muhamedowa, 2015; Washington, 2005). Among these, there are 28 periphrastic V+V constructions, which we refer to as *co-headed verbs (CHVs,* including light/auxiliary/descriptive/vector etc. verbs). Similar to the English [*have +* past participle] construction, Kazakh uses CHVs to express the perfective viewpoint aspect. Surprisingly, variations of this aspectual category are split into six different constructions. The examples below show two types: (1) implies a lack of consideration/ignorance, and (2) forces the durative reading of a perfective event.

(1) Berik   Aygerim-niŋ   sïra-sï-n   **iš-e**   **sal-dï**
     Berik   Aygerim-GEN   beer-3-ACC   **drink-CVB.A**   **CHV('put')-PST[3]**
     'Berik just drank Aygerim's beer.'

(2) kitap-tï   aqïrïn   **oqï-p**   **šïq-tï-m**
     book-ACC   slowly   **read-CVB.B**   **CHV('exit')-PST-1SG**
     'I read the entire book slowly.'

In the earliest written variety of Turkic, dated in the 8th century AD, only one such CHV functioned as a perfective (Rentzsch, 2011). The different varieties then appear to have acquired the additional perfective CHVs in a stepwise fashion. By the 12th century, we observe two CHVs, by the 15th century, three, and three more until today. This study maps the development of perfective CHVs in the lineage of Kazakh with a focus on syntactic changes and semantic differentiation that come in line with the addition of the new CHVs. We take a panchronic, multivariate approach based on published grammars and processed primary sources.

While we have clear ideas on such instances of grammaticalization in general (e.g. Aikhenvald & Dixon, 2006; Bybee et al., 1994), the fine details of this process, especially based on concrete diachronic evidence, are scarcely available. In addition to providing exactly this, we contribute to a recent debate in the theory. As opposed to Butt and Lahiri (2013, also e.g. Butt & Geuder, 2001), we argue that Turkic CHV systems evolve relatively quickly, evidenced by their expanse and the concurrent semantic diversification of the CHVs. In general, CHVs become semantically more specific (e.g. *generic perfective* → *completive* and *propinquitive*). From a morphosyntactic perspective, we observe the *desemanticization* and *decategorization* (cf. Hopper & Thompson, 1985) of converbs — suffixes that mark the lexical verb in the CHV construction. Lastly, we argue that *semantic bleaching* is still a necessary assumption (e.g. Bohnemeyer, 2003; Hopper & Traugott, 1993; Kuteva, 2001).

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