

## Imperfective in Modern Eastern Armenian

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All Armenian verbal forms are based on two stems: imperfective (present) and perfective (aorist). During the evolution of the Armenian language a number of forms have shifted, changed or disappeared, whereas certain new forms appeared. However, in the entire Armenian continuum certain aspectual distribution is preserved based on the stem used. It is argued that the verbal forms with the imperfective stem share certain aspectual semantic features despite the variety of the forms (different moods, finite and non-finite forms etc.) which would account for the possibility or impossibility for particular forms to be used in different functions.

The research focuses on mainly Modern Eastern Armenian (MEA), though certain data of Classical Armenian, Modern Western Armenian (MWA) and Armenian dialects will also be applied where relevant.

MEA finite forms consist of synthetic and analytical forms with the indicative mood forms including almost exclusively analytical ones (the only exception is the synthetic aorist preserved from Classical Armenian), whereas oblique moods have synthetic forms with their semantically shifted cognates in Classical Armenian (the only exception concerns the prohibitive and the negative forms of the conditional mood forms which are periphrastic constructions with the connegative participle and the auxiliary verb). This formal distribution showing that the analytical forms are of recent origin is in line with cross-linguistic data (though the evolution of periphrastic forms into synthetic ones in some Armenian dialects indicates also the rotary character of verbal forms).

The analytical forms of the indicative mood consist of perfective, imperfective and destinative participles and the auxiliary verb *ē* 'to be' in present and past. The imperfective participle expresses habitual and/or progressive meanings, the perfective one denotes some complete action or state resulting from the past, and the destinative participle expresses deontic future meaning. This three-facet aspectual opposition is complemented by present and past temporal pair of the auxiliary verb.

Verbs in MEA are usually divided into two classes according to the thematic vowels in them: -*e*- or -*a*-, and formally they can be simple, i.e. imperfective stem plus a thematic vowel (e.g. *erg-e-l* 'to sing') or can contain different grammatical suffixes (cf. 'stem extender' in [Plungian 2006]), e.g. -*v(e)*- (medio-passive), e.g. *gr-v-el* 'to be written', -*(e/a)c'n(e)*- (causative), e.g. *hogn-e-c'n-el* 'to tire', -*e/an(a)*- (inchoative), e.g. *sev-an-al* 'to blacken', -*n(e)*-, -*č'(e)*-, e.g. *tes-n-el* 'to see', *p'ax-č'-el* 'to flee'.

The choice of the stem for a particular verb form is common for all classes of verbs except the simple verbs with the thematic vowel -*e*- which use the imperfective stem for all the paradigmatic forms but for the aorist ones.

The distribution of imperfective and perfective stems in MEA has the following picture:

	Imperfective stem	Perfective stem
<i>Non-finite</i>	imperfective destinative connegative simultaneous infinitive (subjective)	perfective resultative (subjective)
<i>Finite</i>	subjunctive prs./ pst. conditional prs./ pst. (debitive prs./ pst.)	aorist imperative

Such formal opposition cannot but express aspectual semantics (cf. [Plungian 2006] speaks about latent aspectual category of perfectivity in Armenian verb system) with the perfective stem reserved for the aorist, perfective and resultative participle and, interestingly, imperative/prohibitive (cf. in Classical Armenian the imperfective stem was used for prohibitive forms, whereas the perfective one for the imperative). Another opposition concerns the distribution of analytical and synthetic forms which is estimated to be the actualization ('temporal mobility') of the situation for the analytical forms and by the lack of it for the synthetic ones (cf. [Plungian 2006]). The actualization in this sense is directly linked to the realis or assertive modality.

MEA subjunctive forms coming from Classical Armenian indicative present and imperfect tenses, the choice of the imperfective stem is evident both in conditional and debitive forms which have the same subjunctive forms with the addition of the prefixal particle *k-* to the conditional and the debitive particle *piti* to the debitive forms respectively. The subjunctive participle (*-oġ*) deviates from the general logic taking the imperfective stem for all the verbs with the thematic vowel *-e-* and the perfective stem for all the verbs with the thematic vowel *-a-*.

Analyzing the evolution of the imperfective semantics in MEA it is significant to note that Classical Armenian present and past imperfect of the indicative mood shifted into present and past subjunctive in both branches of Modern Armenian. Attested examples in Classical Armenian of present and past imperfect forms in subjunctive functions could account for such a path (see [Minassian 2002, Abrahamyan 1964, Meillet 1936 a.o.]).

In Middle Armenian forms with *k-* appear for present and past imperfect tense forms which in MWA have been preserved and are still used to mark indicative present and imperfect (e.g. *aprel* 'to live' – *k'aprim* 'I live/I am living' – *k'aprēi* 'I lived/I was living'; *mnal* 'to stay' – *kə mnam* 'I stay/I am staying' – *kə mnaji* 'I stayed/I was staying'), whereas in MEA these forms developed into conditional mood forms (cf. the present conditional is often used as a simple future). Middle Armenian data should be treated with certain reservation for generalization for the whole Armenian continuum, since it refers usually to Cilician Armenian, i.e. Western branch, though conventionally called 'Middle Armenian'.

Parallel to *k-* forms another strategy is used to mark the present and imperfect tenses, namely, the locative constructions of the infinitive with the preposition (e.g. *i gal en* '[they] come/are coming'), which probably later developed into the dedicated locative form in *-um* without the preposition and then into the imperfective participle. The imperfective suffix *-um* which existed already in Classical Armenian as a locative suffix for certain nominal classes (e.g. *k<sup>h</sup>um* 'your.LOC', *merum* 'our.LOC'), is usually considered to have the same origin as the locative one (cf. [Atcharyan 1961, Antosyan 1974, Asatryan 1983]; Tomson [1890:231] and Meillet [1977:73] consider that the Armenian imperfective suffix *-um* is the cognate of Indo-European suffix *-mo*, like in Old Slavonic participle *nesomo-*), e.g. e.g. *aprel* 'to live' – *aprum*; *mn-al* 'to stay' – *mnum* vs. *senjak* 'room' – *senjak-um* 'in the room'. The suffix *-um* and the locative case in general exist neither in MWA nor in Western branch of Armenian dialects. In general, MWA tends to be more conservative for the verbal system, whereas MEA is more conservative for the nominal one. The isogloss of the present tense (as well as the presence or absence of the locative case) is one of the principal ones for the classification of Armenian dialects.

The present indicative in MEA, being the only present tense, has both progressive and habitual semantics. It can also be used as a historical present and to express near future functions. The future indicative with the destinative participle in *-u* (formally gen/dat of the infinitive) and the auxiliary verb expresses deontic/prospective meaning, the conditional and debitive constructions express direct, 'subjunctive' meaning. Future meaning in MEA can be also expressed by the subjunctive present (obligation semantics (cf. English 'should') or hortative), as well as the aorist (see [Donabedian 2016]). An interesting tendency of the subjunctive use is after modal and volitive verbs instead of the infinitive.

The imperfect indicative like the present can have both habitual and progressive semantics (cf. habitual and irrelevant situation is usually transmitted by past conditional). Narrative imperfect uses can also be rarely found (cf. [Kozintseva 1995a, 1995b])

For a group of some ‘relict’ verbs (e.g. *em* ‘to be’, *unem* ‘to have’, *gitem* ‘to know’ etc.), the imperfectivity in MEA is expressed in a particular way with a special paradigm distribution as compared to all other Armenian verbs:

- 1) A defective paradigm with only present and past tense forms which are Classical Armenian present and imperfect: e.g. *em, es, ē, enk’, ek’, en* (present) and *ēi, ēir, ēr, ēink’, ēik’, ēin* (past) for the verb ‘to be’; *unem, unes, uni, unenk’, unek’, unen* (present) and *unei, uneir, uner, uneink’, uneik’, unein* (past) for the verb ‘to have’).
- 2) A full regular paradigm with a respective infinitive: e.g. *linel* ‘to be’ and *unenal* ‘to have’.

Present and past imperfect forms of the first and second paradigms (periphrastic constructions) have a strict distribution of non-habitual and habitual imperfective semantics respectively (1). It can be argued that the ‘inchoative’ suffix *-(a/e)n* contains stative habitual semantics.

(1) EANC

...mer-ac-ner-ə	gerezman	<b>en</b>	<b>unen-um,</b>	isk	na	<b>č<sup>h</sup>-un-i</b>
die-RES-PL-DEF	grave	<b>be.AUX.3PL</b>	<b>have-IPFV</b>	but	he/she	<b>NEG-have-3SG</b>

‘...the dead have (usually) graves but he does not have.’

Currently, in both Standard Armenians no dedicated progressive is considered to exist, however, such forms exist in non-standard/dialectal forms [Donabedian 2001]. Most probably the new present forms were first used in a progressive sense and then only extended to other more general present functions (cf. [Bybee et al. 1995, Gevorgyan 1993, 1995, Haspelmath 1998, Tatevosov 2005]). At some period this ‘general’ present was not sufficient and new progressive forms were put forward which are attested in many Armenian dialects, especially in the Western branch. Dedicated progressive forms are mainly expressed by particles added to the existing present tense forms (e.g. *kor, er, dar/uni/g’uni, haye, haykak* etc., as well as the instrumental infinitive form with the auxiliary etc. (cf. [Atcharyan 1961], [Gevorgyan 1993, 1995]). The influence of Turkic and Iranian language contact is significant for the progressive forms (cf. Turkish progressive forms in *-yor-* [Swift, Lloyd 1997], or Persian progressive forms with the auxiliary verb *dāštan* ‘to have’ [Lazard 2006, Rubinchik 2001]).

The fact that in Modern Armenian the subjunctive forms are used in different types of subordinate clauses, in which present indicative is blocked, can be accounted for the original indicative character of these forms and for the inappropriateness of progressive forms in similar functions.

In some dialects the simultaneous participle/converb in *-is* is also used together with *-um* constructions to mark the progressive aspect (cf. in many Armenian traditional grammars this form is marked as ‘imperfective 2’). Besides, in certain Armenian dialects it is the general form to mark the present (cf. the so-called dialects in *-el*). The suffix *-is* is considered to be the accusative/locative plural form of the infinitive in Classical Armenian which would account for its ‘synonymous’ use with the participle in *-um*.

The participle/converb in *-is* can be used either as a converb (in time clauses), or in relative tense forms with the auxiliary verb *linel* ‘to be’ to mark some progressive action (2). As compared to the imperfective participle in *-um* with its “general” present semantics, this form marks the progressive aspectual semantics.

(2) EANC

git-ei                    or    du    in<sub>3</sub>            spas-el-is            k-lin-es  
know-PST.1SG        that    you    I.DAT        wait-INF-SIM        COND-be-2SG  
'I knew that you were waiting for me.'

The monosyllabic verbs *gal* 'to come', *lal* 'to cry' and *tal* 'to give' make exception from all the other verbs in MEA and in many Eastern dialects by forming their imperfective participle by adding the suffix *-is* (*gal-is* (\**gum*), *tal-is* (\**tum*), *lal-is* (\**lum*)).

Currently, in MEA koiné the simultaneous participle/converb is almost systematically replaced by the ablative form of the infinitive (3), though the linguists in Armenia are 'struggling' against it and consider such usage erroneous. The origin of the ablative in this function is not quite clear, since it is attested neither in Classical Armenian, nor in Western Armenian branch (cf. ablative gerund in Latin).

(3) EANC

ižn-el-uc<sup>h</sup>                    k-ta-s                    in<sub>3</sub>  
descend-inf-abl        cond-give-2sg        I.DAT  
'You will give me while going down.'

The imperfectivity in Armenian has been and is one of the most 'dynamic' categories resulting in its active evolution and elaboration of various semantic nuances, whereas the distribution of the imperfective and perfective stems indicates the inherent aspectual and modal features preserved in the entire Armenian continuum.

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