

Björn Wiemer

**Unity behind diversity
among tense-aspect uses in the non-past domain
of Slavic languages**

The Slavic aspect system is based on stem derivation, and this system started developing in Common Slavic times, i.e. prior to the breakup of a comparatively homogeneous dialect continuum during the second half of the first millennium AD. The core distinctions between perfective and imperfective stems must have been common to all successive varieties, both in terms of the morphological patterns and the functions behind the PFV:IPFV contrast. Simultaneously, Common Slavic lacked a morphological distinction of present and future; all morphological futures in Slavic appeared after the aforementioned breakup, and during the last 1,000 years various source expressions have shown tendencies of becoming future grams. Since the 14th century, we increasingly observe that South and North Slavic diverge and we now see a basic isogloss running across Slavic: while in the South Slavic languages a dedicated future marker occurs with stems of either aspect and, with the exception of Slovene, this marker derives from the verb WANT (*xotěti/xătěti*), the North Slavic languages use a BECOME-based future marker, which is however restricted to ipfv. stems (Slovene shares the etymological basis with North Slavic, but “behaves” like other South Slavic languages as for the lack of aspect restrictions). By the same token, only South Slavic languages make a grammatical difference between present and future for both ipfv. and pfv. stems, while North Slavic language are incapable of marking this difference with pfv. stems.

On this backdrop, I will ask what are the functional domains of the perfective present (PFV.PRS) and how they can be distinguished from a future proper. The resulting classification provides an occasion to focus on two issues:

- Where are the functional domains of overlap between present and future, particularly with pfv. verbs? And why doesn't this overlap depend on whether pfv. stems allow for a grammatical distinction between present and future or not?
- What unites North and South Slavic languages in their employment of pfv. stems in the non-past domain? Or otherwise: what can be considered diachronically constant factors in the employment of PFV.PRS, and what explains this unity?