

TEMPORAL BOUNDARIES IN ALSEA

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This paper proposes a new analysis of the aspectual system of Alsea — specifically, the way temporal boundaries are marked. The only existing grammar, a manuscript by Leo J. Frachtenberg (1918), gives an unclear picture of how time is marked in Alsea. Frachtenberg describes the suffix *-ai* as the ‘inchoative’, which I consider to be basically correct, but calls *-x* a ‘verbalizing suffix’ which is ‘dropped’ under ill-defined circumstances (p. 149f). I argue that this *-x* is actually a COMPLETIVE marker which indicates the final boundary of an event in time, while the INCHOATIVE, conversely, marks the initial boundary. Together they constitute the primary means by which Alsea codes the temporal nature of an event.¹

The inchoative²

The inchoative suffix *-ai* shows that the action described by the verb has a definite beginning, and when used by itself often can be translated by the English ‘begin’. It is subject to considerable phonetic variation, although the most common form is [ai].³ Some typical uses:

- (1) *temúhu: qamɬ-*
and.then be.dark-INCH
‘At last it got dark.’ (132.35)
- (2) *tem=ɬx múhu: ay-ái*
and=3pLS then go-INCH
‘Finally they started out.’ (24.1)
- (3) *temúhu: tɔp-ái*
and.then fly-INCH
‘Then he flew away.’ (136.9)
- (4) *temúhu: k'e-ái=slo*
and.then stop-INCH=all
‘Then everyone stopped.’ (26.12)

All of these examples have in common the entrance into some sort of state or activity, which is marked by the inchoative: darkness, journey, flight, and even cessation. It might seem a bit strange to find the verb ‘stop’ in (4) with a morpheme that typically indicates the beginning of an action, but the crucial point is that a new state has been entered, distinguished from the previous one by the *lack* of a given activity. In a simpler but comparable context:

- (5) *tem=aux múhu: qalhɬ-ái*
and=3duS then escape-INCH
‘So the two of them escaped.’ (j70.21)

‘Escape’ is a verb which, like ‘stop’, can be thought of as referring to the end of some state, i.e. captivity. But it is also clearer with ‘escape’ that the change in state

can be looked at differently: not as an exit from captivity but as an entrance into freedom. The same shift in perspective applies to the Alsea *keá-* ‘stop’.

The form [ai] of the inchoative is phonetically identical to the unstressed form of the verb ‘go’, suggesting that it may have originated as an auxiliary verb with a meaning not far from the ‘entrance into a state’ metaphor used earlier. Since there are no records of an earlier stage in the history of Alsea, however, this hypothesis is based only on the phonetic similarity and the semantic plausibility of such a development.

Since *-ai* makes reference only to the beginning of the action or process, it can be used for somewhat different situations, as in the following two sentences:

(6) *temúhu: kexk-ái=slo: ts-hítə-k*
 and.then assemble-INCH=all DET-body-POSS
 ‘Thereupon all the people assembled.’ (132.35)

(7) *kexk-ái=slo: ts-hítə-k múhu:*
 assemble-INCH=all DET-body-POSS then
 ‘All the people began to assemble.’ (42.22)

After sentence (6), the text goes on to describe what the people did as a group, while following (7) is a further description of the process of assembling, including mention of the types of people that came. The translations do not capture the precise semantics expressed by the Alsea verb because English does not encode the same aspectual distinctions. Alsea is here concerned only with whether the events have a beginning and an end. In both (6) and (7) the assembly has begun, so the inchoative is used.

All of the examples given so far are translated in English by the past tense, even though *-ai* makes no explicit reference to tense. In fact, Alsea encodes no systematic distinction between present and past time, relying on the context and logic of the sentence, along with the aspect markers, to convey the idea of tense. The inchoative by its very nature is unlikely to be interpreted as present tense, since it basically refers to a single point in time at which one state gave way to another. But the new state may indeed continue in the present, as in the following:

(8) *tém=íta hke qaid: átsk-ai:*
 and=but just immediately sleep-INCH
 ‘Then he just fell right to sleep.’ (134.12)

(9) *atsk-ái: múhu:*
 sleep-INCH now
 ‘He is asleep now.’ (j71.37)

These two verbs are marked exactly alike in Alsea (I do not believe that the stress shift is significant here), but they have been rendered by different tenses in the English equivalents. In essence they refer to the same situation — a state of sleep which has begun — but the context demands different interpretations. Sentence (8) is found in a series of past events and, accompanied by the adverb ‘immediately’, suggests an emphasis on the punctual entrance into the state; (9) is spoken by a character in the story who has been waiting for the subject to fall asleep.⁴ Here the English present perfect would be a more literal translation (‘he has fallen asleep’), but the distinction is not a necessary one: compare the French ‘il est mort’, which

can mean ‘he died’, ‘he has died’, and ‘he is dead’; or ‘il est parti’ meaning ‘he left’, ‘he has left’, and ‘he is gone’. The important factor in these French sentences, and on a much wider scale in Alsea, is that the new state has begun. A strictly present-tense meaning (‘he is falling asleep this very minute’) is not attested for *atsk-ái*. Since the texts do not provide an example of this sentence, it is unclear how an Alsea speaker would have expressed such an idea — though the next paragraph presents a possible candidate.

A variation on the inchoative use of *ai-* is found in its appearance with the prefix *λ-* and the suffix *-u*. This combination of three elements, which I have termed the ‘transitional’, describes a transition from one state to another, similar to the use of ‘become’ in English. The suffix *-u* seems to occur only in combination with the inchoative (unstressed); the prefix *λ-* elsewhere conveys a transitive, causative, or intensive idea, but here it seems to contribute nothing in particular aside from being a necessary part of this construction, which is intransitive:

- (10) *temúhu* *λə-álkin-iy-u*
and.then TRNL-quiet-INCH-TRNL
‘Then he quieted down.’ (64.37)
- (11) *tem=aux múhu λə-áltuxt-iy-u*
and=3duS then TRNL-be.big-INCH-TRNL
‘They grew tall.’ (124.10)
- (12) *λ-áq-ay-u=axa*
TRNL-be.well-INCH-TRNL=again
‘She became well again.’ (j75.9)

While the inchoative alone denotes change from one state to another, the transitional gives more emphasis to the actual process of change.

The completive

The second major morpheme marking temporal boundaries is *-x*, which I am calling the completive.⁵ An epenthetic [ə] or [a] is often added. The completive is the inverse of the inchoative, since it indicates whether there is a terminal boundary to the action or process — i.e. whether or not it is completed. The subsequent events may certainly be related to the one marked with the completive — they may in fact be the direct result of the first one — but they are seen as distinct in their performance:

- (13) *hik=axa tsliyáq-t-əx, qén-t-xa múhu*
just=again straighten-STAT-CMPL die-STAT-CMPL finally
‘He just straightened out again, and died.’ (j69.11)
- (14) *tem λəái’s-x xas məshásla-tsəo*
and look-CMPL ERG.DET woman-AUG
‘The old woman looked around.’ (134.22)
- (15) *temúhu mis=axa wil-x*
and.then RLS.COMP=back come-CMPL
‘And then after she came back...’ (154.10)

- (16) tэм=1та айкi' káxke-s-t-əx=slo'
 and=but already together-?-STAT-CMPL=all
 '...the people had already assembled.' (154.10)

In these examples the completive -x marks two similar types of completion. 'Straighten out' and 'die' in (13) and 'look' in (14) are simply actions or events that are finished; in principle they had beginnings, but only the fact that they are now accomplished is relevant to the narrative. It would be theoretically possible to treat 'die' as entry into a new state (as with 'stop'), but it is not surprising that the state preceding death, i.e. life, should be considered much more important than whatever may follow, and the finality is definitely more salient than the transition in states. Similarly, in (14) the woman looks around and then immediately announces what she has seen, so the process and its beginning are not as important as the completed act of perception. (15) and (16), which make up one sentence in the text, demonstrate the use of -x to show that the events are over with before the next actions take place. The verb wil- 'come, arrive' is almost always used with the completive, which is logical since it refers to the end of a journey; it can be used with the inchoative, though, if the origin of something which has recently arrived is being considered:

- (17) k/ist/is=axa phains-ái-m haḵ-n'keai wil-'-sal
 RES/IduS/*=back go.see-INCH-INTR ABL-where come-INCH-DSTR
 'Then we will go see where it started.' (214.34)

The use of suffixes with kexk- 'assemble' illustrates the highly subjective nature of aspect. In (6) and (7) I gave kexk-ái- as an example of the inchoative, and now in (16) we have káxke-s-t-əx (the -s and -t suffixes are explained below). The difference is in the perspective of the speaker. The inchoative is used when the process of assembling is viewed from the beginning, as in (6), since the relevant characters are present to observe. When the 'protagonist' arrives after the gathering has already taken place, however — as is the case in (16) — the transition from 'no people' to 'many people' is unimportant: all that matters is that the people are there now. This difference is expressed in English with the past perfect aspect 'had assembled'.

Special uses of the completive

There are several verbs which are used with the completive even though they seem to be stative in nature, i.e. they do not seem to describe completed actions but rather on-going situations. For example, tqaiált- 'want, like' seems to require -x for all realis constructions:

- (18) mstə tэм=in tqaiált-əx sis kexk-ái-m
 thus and=1sgS want-CMPL IRR.COMP assemble-INCH-INTR
 'For that reason I want [the people] to assemble.' (42.26)
- (19) 'x/an/iya? tqaiált-əx
 NEG/1sgS/* like-CMPL
 'I don't like it.' (48.18)

- (20) ʔxiyaʔ qá-uʔkeai tqaiáld-əx
 NEG ERG-someone want-CMPL
 ‘Nobody wanted him.’ (j72.20)

Note that the same form is used for the present and past time interpretations; as with the inchoative examples above, the context determines the appropriate English tense. The completive can be justified by defining *tqaiált-* as ‘take a liking to, be struck with a desire to’; these events would have to be completed before the feeling of liking or wanting could exist.⁶

A similar pattern is found with the verb *yáts-* ‘live, stay’. This verb also has a formulaic use at the beginning of a narrative to establish the existence of a character:

- (21) xám-ət s=htsləm yáts-x
 one-ADJ DET=person live-CMPL
 ‘There once lived a certain man.’ (j72.19)

- (22) yáts-x=aux káaxke
 live-CMPL=3duS together
 ‘The two of them lived together.’ (116.1)

- (23) yáts-x=ax=aʔ hʔki
 live-CMPL=2sgS=Q here
 ‘Do you live here?’ (j65.4)

As with *tqaiált-*, these examples show *-x* in the present and past. And also like *tqaiált-*, the semantics of *yáts-* must be defined within Alesa, not according to English equivalents. In reality this verb seems to mean ‘take up residence’ (compare sentence (33)), an action which must be completed before the state of residence can begin — hence the completive. The inchoative is not used in this context because the residence was established at an earlier point in time which is not relevant to the discourse; only the established residence is important.

Whereas the completive views an action as over and done with, the inchoative marks a process which has begun but could at any time come to an end. Thus, when it takes the inchoative, *yáts-* (unstressed form *its-*) is best understood as ‘stay’, a more temporary notion than ‘live’:

- (24) tem-áux mʔhu its-ái xúsi qátse
 and-3duS then stay-INCH little long.time
 ‘The two of them stayed for a little while.’ (74.19)

The period of ‘staying’ starts after other events in the narrative, so the beginning is salient. Frachtenberg’s translation:

And when he arrived home he began to make his son (well). Then after he got through (with) him they two staid [sic] in the house for a little while.
 Then one day Suku said to his two cousins... (p. 75)

The inchoative indicates that the stay begins and then lasts for a while; the end of the stay is not explicit in the story, so no completive is used. Still, the completive can be used with *yáts-* to mean ‘stay’ in the right context:

- (25) temúhu: 'xiya? qátse yáts-x is itsáís
 and.then NEG long.time stay-CMPL LOC house
 'He had not been in the house very long [when...]' (72.11)

Here 'stay' is used to refer to a period of inactivity, not just location in a given place; the rest of the sentence describes the character's actions shortly after entering the house—*after* the inactive 'stay' is over. The end of this stay is the only salient part here, so the inchoative would be inappropriate.

A third verb which seems to exhibit a strange use of the completive is *mə́án-* 'know'. In the texts it is always used with the suffix *-x*:

- (26) hamsti?t=əx h_kə intsk's mə́án-x
 every=2sgS just thing know-CMPL
 'You know everything.' (40.13)

- (27) mə́án-x=an k=in=aúx iltq-áa
 know-CMPL=1sgS FUT=1sgS=3duO do-TR.INCH
 'I know what I will do to those two.' (j74.10)

- (28) tem=áʰλ múhu: mə́án-iy-u-x^u
 and=1plS now know-INCH-2sgO-CMPL
 'Now we know you.' (40.11)

It would appear that the best way to explain this usage is, as before, through an appeal to the semantics of the verb. If *mə́án-* means 'come to know, realize; become acquainted with', then the need to complete this action before knowledge exists is ample explanation for the completive. The completive alone implies that the process of 'coming to know' was either very short or simply unimportant; this is the normal situation when a fact is involved, as in (26) and (27), since learning a fact is generally just a matter of hearing it. The use of both the inchoative and the completive in (28) serves as further support for this analysis of the meaning of *mə́án-*. As explained in the next section, the two suffixes together mark the beginning and end boundaries and imply that the process took a certain length of time and is relevant to the narrative. This is a natural way to interpret (28) because it refers to knowledge of a person's qualities and abilities, something which takes time to learn. To quote Frachtenberg's translation of the context for both (26) and (28):

Verily, now we *know* thee. For that very reason will our hearts be strong once more, because we *know* thee. Thou *knowest* everything. (p.□41; emphasis added)

There are two kinds of 'know' here. The first type, which is seen in the first two instances, employs both the inchoative and completive, and could be paraphrased 'we have come to know you'. This usage is also found elsewhere in a similar context, where knowledge of a person is similarly being discussed:

- (29) mə́án-iy-əmts-x=ast
 know-INCH-1sgO-CMPL=IduO
 'He knows the two of us.' (j71.28)

Here again the knowledge referred to is that of character or personality, which would allow one to predict the others' actions after having 'come to know' them. In contrast, the second type of 'know' in the passage, marked only with the completive, would sound strange as 'you have come to know everything'. There is no implication in the story that this omniscience is the result of long study; indeed, since the addressee (Coyote) is a mythical figure, it is natural to treat his knowledge as something which now exists but has an uncertain origin. Given the postulated definition of *məɬá:n-*, the completive would express this attitude.

Combinations and contrasts

As mentioned above, the inchoative *-ai-* and completive *-x* can be used together. In fact, this is a frequent combination, which refers to a process seen as bounded in time both initially and finally; often it is not unlike the traditional definition of the aorist. The dual boundedness can imply that the process is a short one, since it is not free to extend in either temporal 'direction':

(30) *namk k/aúx/uts qt-'-xa 'k=as ku'x*
 when HAB/3duS/* climb.over-INCH-CMPL LOC=DET log
 'Whenever they climbed over a log...' (j71.12)

(31) *temúhu: tipx-á-ín-x*
 and.then offer.food-INCH-PASS-CMPL
 'Then he was offered food.' (j74.27)

(32) *ɬt[u]-ú-i-xa*
 swim-INCH-CMPL
 'He swam for a short time [but floated right back].' (62.21)

All of these actions are relatively short in duration and clearly definable in time; each is easy to see as a unit. The last example, which is located in a series of similar usages, resembles the use of a perfective prefix in Russian to mean 'for a little while' (e.g. *govorit* 'talk,' *po-govorit* 'have a talk'). Recall the definition earlier (examples (21) to (23)) of the verb *yats-* as 'take up residence'; this definition is clearly supported by the following usage:

(33) *temúhu: i:s xam-ət s=lehw: w'l-x tem its-ái-xa*
 and.then LOC one-ADJ DET=place come-CMPL and live-INCH-CMPL
 'Then he came to a place and took up residence.' (118.2)

Here the deliberate act of moving in is bounded by his journey there and his subsequent wooing of a wife, so both the inchoative and completive are used.

With appropriate modifiers the action can have a longer duration, but it must remain bounded in the mind of the speaker:

(34) *tem=uk^u h'ke qátse uy[u]-ú-i-xa-sxa*
 and=away just long.time barrier-INCH-CMPL-REFL
 'He made a barrier of himself for a long time.' (72.31)

Whatever the length of the action, the fundamental property of boundedness remains unchanged. The beginning and end are very clear in this particular example — the

subject pretends to have his leg stuck until the others threaten to trample him — and nothing else is said about this period of time, so it is treated as a clearly demarcated temporal unit. It happens to be a bigger unit than, for instance, that required in (30) to climb over a log, but is nonetheless clearly bounded.

Perhaps the best way to get a feel for the way *-ai·* and *-x* function is to look at their use in contrastive situations. Consider the following pair:

(35) *temúhu: qaúwí:s ats-sáa-k tp-ái·-xa kw·-ks=auk*
 and.then first DET-sister-POSS jump-INCH-CMPL canoe-ALL=inside
 ‘First his elder sister jumped into the canoe.’ (132.12)

(36) *temúhu: qalpái· ats-mútsk-ak tp-ái·*
 and.then next DET-younger.brother-POSS jump-INCH
 ‘Next his younger brother jumped.’ (132.13)

The difference in markings on the two verbs may seem at first unmotivated, but the context offers a clear explanation (Frachtenberg’s translation):

Then after he arrived in the canoe he floated in it far out in the water. Thereupon the elder sister jumped [*tpái·xa*] first into the canoe; verily, she got into it correctly. And then his younger brother jumped in [*tpái·*] next. He almost fell short. He touched the water just a little bit. (p. 133)

In the first case, the jumping was begun (*-ai·*) and completed (*-x*) successfully. In the second, however, the jump from the shore (*-ai·*) was not immediately completed. Frachtenberg translates this as ‘jumped in’, but I feel that this carries an implication of completion which is not present in the original and even sounds somewhat out of place in English, given the rest of the paragraph. Simply ‘jumped’ would be better, since the particle ‘in’ here conveys a completive meaning very similar to the Alsea *-x*. The narrator leaves the action literally suspended in mid-air in order to describe the difficulties of the younger brother. The eventual completion of the jump is implied by the subsequent sentences, which in a sense replace the completive marking. In this situation the completive resembles the use of the Russian perfective to imply success (*ya emu po-zvonil* ‘I called him’) where the imperfective shows failure (*ya emu zvonil* ‘I tried to call him [but he wasn’t home]’).⁷

A second pair of examples involves the verb ‘sleep’:

(37) *tém=íta híke qaid· átsk-ai·*
 and=but just immediately sleep-INCH
 ‘Then he just fell right to sleep.’ (134.12) (=8)

(38) *temúhu: astk-ái·-xa*
 and.then sleep-INCH-CMPL
 ‘Then he slept.’ (174.38)

Sentence (37) says only that the state of sleep has begun. This is necessary because the story goes on to describe how he is killed in his sleep, which is therefore never completed (not in the normal way, at any rate). In contrast, (38) describes the entire night, not just the beginning of the sleeping process. Thus the time spent sleeping

can be treated as a single unit, bounded in time by the events that precede and follow it.

Finally, the beginning and end to an action can be distributed over different verbs, especially when there are special words for different parts of the action. Verbs of movement are prime examples of this lexical specialization:

(39) xam-ʼ=axa, tem=axa yaʼls-áí
 turn.back-INCH=back and=back return.home-INCH
 ‘He turned back and started home.’ (j66.6)

(40) temúhu: mis=axa wíl-x, tem pxeʼltsu:s-á-λn-x
 and.then RLS.COMP=back come-CMPL and ask-INCH-PASS-CMPL
 ‘And when he got back he was asked...’ (j66.7)

Number (39) supplies two (somewhat redundant) examples of the same usage: the inchoative marks the beginning of the journey homeward. Then (40), which directly follows (39) in the text, uses the completive to mark the end of the same journey, clearing the way for the next temporal ‘unit’: asking a question. Note that this latter action is treated as a dually bounded unit as well, since utterances are clearly marked in time by the linear nature of speech: every sentence must begin and end. This is another sample of the aorist-like characteristics of -áí and -x together.

The stative suffix

An additional suffix which interacts with the inchoative and completive markers is the stative -t (which may be related to the homonymous adjectival suffix).

(41) ailki: yúx-t-əx
 already disappear-STAT-CMPL
 ‘He had already disappeared.’ (j70.8)

(42) tém=ʼta múhu: kəa qén-t-əx
 and=but at.last indeed die-STAT-CMPL
 ‘But then he was finally dead.’ (64.38)

The suffix -t turns these punctual verbs (‘disappear’, ‘die’) into stative verbs (‘be gone’, ‘be dead’). The addition of the completive shows that the state has been entered, i.e. that the punctual action required to enter the state has been completed; this punctual action is that described by the verb stem which takes the stative suffix (here, disappearance and death). This combination resembles the inchoative with certain verbs, such as qalhk-áí ‘she has escaped’ or qamʼ- ‘it got dark’. This apparently paradoxical functional overlap can be explained by defining the verbs which take the inchoative as already denoting a state or process — for example, ‘be free’ instead of ‘escape’, ‘be dark’ instead of ‘become dark’, ‘go’ instead of ‘leave’.

It is still possible, however, to use the stative -t with an inherently stative verb, as long as an intermediate step is included: the addition of the suffix -s. This suffix, which is homonymous with the nominalizing suffix, is of unclear meaning, beyond the fact that it must be present when the stative suffix is used with a stative

verb. The completive then emphasizes that the action of the verb precedes the action of the following verb:

- (43) *tém=ɪta hɪkɛ qaid' átsk-ai'*
 and=but just immediately sleep-INCH
 'Then he just fell right to sleep.' (134.12) (=37)
- (44) *temúhu: mis tsá'amə átsk-əs-t-əx*
 and.then RLS.COMP very sleep-?-STAT-CMPL
 'Then after he was sound asleep...' (134.13)

These two sentences, which occur consecutively in the text, differ primarily in the perspective of the speaker. In (43), the fact that the man is entering a sleeping state is most important; the focus is on the moment, as a part of the narrative, when he falls asleep. Then, in (44), the crucial fact is that he is now in a deep state of sleep (which will allow the others to kill him). The stative-completive is like a look back over one's shoulder at the completed entrance into the state, while the inchoative observes the beginning with eyes straight ahead, in accordance with the natural flow of time.

The following examples with the verb *λo'h-* 'climb' further illustrate the interaction of the inchoative, completive, and stative:

- (45) *κ/úk^u/ts múhu: qáhalt λo'h-ái'*
 HAB/up/* now seemingly climb-INCH
 'He would pretend to start climbing up.' (60.15)
- (46) *tem gauwa?^a hɪkɛ látəq λo'h-ái'-xa*
 and whole just thing climb-INCH-CMPL
 'Then the whole group climbed up.' (60.10)
- (47) *temúhu: mis λó'h-as-t-əx, tem tsilh-ái'*
 and.now RLS.COMP climb-?-STAT-CMPL and sing-INCH
 'After he got to the top, he started to sing.' (60.14)

The inchoative in (45) shows that the action is begun but not completed (since he is only pretending to climb up, and slides back down shortly after beginning). The inchoative and the completive in (46) together mark an action with a clear beginning (leaving the ground) and end (reaching the top). The stative and completive in (47) focus on the end of the process of climbing, which must be finished before the singing can begin. Notice also that this *-s-t-əx* construction is used with the realis complementizer *mis* 'when, after' in both (44) and (47). In fact, almost all verbs marked with this precise combination of suffixes occur in clauses introduced by *mis*; however, there are some exceptions, as in (51):

- (48) *mis káq-s-t-əx*
 RLS.COMP come.ashore-?-STAT-CMPL
 'After he came ashore...' (62.18)
- (49) *ms=iλx múhu: λáq-s-t-əx*
 RLS.COMP=3plS at.last cross-?-STAT-CMPL
 'When they finally got across...' (134.28)

(50) tem ms=aux mŭhu' hásk-is-t-əx
 and RLS.COMP=3duS at.last die-?-STAT-CMPL
 'After they were dead...' (j73.32)

(51) tém=ŭta ailki' kaxke-s-t-əx=slo'
 and=but already together-?-STAT-CMPL=all
 'The people had already assembled.' (154.10)

Both *mis* 'after' and *ailki'* 'already' focus on the end of a state or event, so it is quite natural that the stative-completive construction, which has the same emphasis, is usually used with one of them.

Irrealis forms

Both the inchoative and completive have special forms in the irrealis mood. One of these, the transitive inchoative *-aa*, can be seen in (27). This portmanteau morpheme is always used in the irrealis when there is a third-person object. With intransitive verbs, or transitive verbs with a first- or second-person object, the form of the inchoative is identical to that used in the realis.

More interesting is the status of the completive in the irrealis mood. The suffix *-x* seems to be used only in the fixed stative-completive construction; and when there is no emphasis on the end of an action, then a verb like 'come', which so commonly takes the completive in the realis, may occur as a simple stem (reminiscent of the English subjunctive):

(52) tqaiált-x=an sis há'ŭga wi'l as qóna
 want-CMPL=1sgS IRR.COMP quickly come DET coroner
 'I want the coroner to come right away.' (220.25)

In (52) the emphasis is on notifying the coroner to come, and not yet on his arrival; thus it is not surprising that the completive is not used. When a completive meaning is desired, however, a special allomorph *-i'* is found:

(53) k=úk=ən háits w'l-i'
 FUT=who=Q here come-CMPL
 'Who will come here?' (214.4)

The same suffix is used with the verbs discussed above that generally take the completive:

(54) si/p/s xam? intsk's məlán-i'
 IRR.COMP/2plS/* one something know-CMPL
 '[It's good] that one of you knows something.' (184.21)

(55) si/p/s tqaiáld-i'
 IRR.COMP/2plS/* want-CMPL
 'If you desire it...' (24.3)

(56) k=xan hi'ke káaxke yáts-i'
 FUT=EduS just together stay-CMPL
 'She and I will stay together.' (j69.31)

Thus the suffix *-i* appears to be simply the irrealis completive, used in those relatively uncommon cases in which the end of a future action is in focus.

To summarize, the inchoative indicates that an action or process has begun. The addition of the transitional emphasizes the change from the first state to the second. The completive marks the end of an action or process. Together the inchoative and completive mark the event as a single unit bounded in time, regardless of its duration. The inchoative and completive interact with the stative suffix, which allows a punctual verb to be used statively. Finally, special forms of the inchoative and completive are used in the irrealis mood.

Abbreviations

Each example sentence is given with the page and line number where it is found; those preceded by ‘j’ are from Frachtenberg (1917), others are from Frachtenberg (1920).

Translations of lexical meaning are given in lower case, and grammatical functions are given in upper case. The following abbreviations have been used: ABL ablative, ADJ adjectival, ALL allative, AUG augmentative, COMP complementizer, CMPL completive, DET determiner, DSTR distributive, ERG ergative, FUT future, HAB habitual, INCH inchoative, INTR intransitive (irrealis), IRR irrealis, LOC locative, NEG negative, PASS passive, POSS possessive (third person), Q interrogative, REFL reflexive, RES resultative, RLS realis, STAT stative, TR transitive, TRNL transitional. For pronouns: 1, 2, 3 = first, second, third person; I, E = inclusive, exclusive (first person); sg, du, pl = singular, dual, plural; S, O, IO, P = subject, object, indirect object, possessive. An asterisk (*) marks the second half of a discontinuous morpheme that has been divided by a clitic; the first half is the initial element of the morpheme cluster. Affixes are set off by a hyphen (-), clitics by an equals sign (=). Clitics dividing a discontinuous morpheme are set off by slashes (/).

The Alsea data preserve the distinctions in Frachtenberg’s original nonphonemic transcription, though adapted to the Americanist alphabet. The symbol [k̟] is a palatalized stop, and the small raised letters represent Frachtenberg’s ‘resonance and epenthetic vowels’. Except where stated otherwise, the free translations given here reflect the published version but have been edited for style.

Notes

¹ Alsea is an extinct language which was spoken on the Oregon coast. Data here are from Frachtenberg (1917, 1920). I would like to thank Scott DeLancey and Colette Craig for their help on my undergraduate thesis (Buckley 1986), parts of which form the basis of this paper; also Natasha Beery and Orin Gensler for their comments on an earlier draft of the paper itself, and Herb Luthin for careful proofreading of the finished product.

² As the following discussion reveals, the Alsea suffix is of more general application than the traditional definition of ‘inchoative’ implies; this term was chosen for lack of a good alternative.

³ After a dental or glottal consonant, except [s] and [ts], the inchoative becomes [i]; before the passive suffix -ɪn it is found as [a] or [aː]; after a uvular it becomes [e], unless a vowel follows; and it combines with a preceding [u] to make [uri]. The inchoative suffix almost always takes the accent, but there are a few cases where the verbal root takes it instead.

⁴ The word mɪq̄hu: ‘now’ is of little help since it occurs constantly in past-time narratives and often means ‘then’ or ‘at last’. It seems to serve usually as a simple transitional word, especially in combination with tem ‘and’.

⁵ Although this term is sometimes used as a synonym for ‘perfective’, the morpheme -x is not precisely the same as a perfective.

⁶ Alternatively, the verb could be lexically marked as belonging to a morphological class which always requires the completive, though this lexical solution seems more arbitrary. See below for further evidence for a semantic explanation.

⁷ This second mention of the Russian perfective is intended only to illustrate the Alsea data and draw another parallel between the ‘completive’ and a traditional ‘perfective’; it is not intended to imply any deeper semantic parallels between the aspectual systems of the two languages.

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