The Semantics of Verbal Morphology in Under-described Languages
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TENSE, ASPECT AND COUNTERFACTUALITY IN KUBAN KABARDIAN

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1. On past tense and counterfactuality

In many languages of the world past tense markers are used in conditional clauses to mark counterfactuality, see e.g. Steele (1975), James (1982), Dahl (1997), Iatridou (2000), Van linden & Verstraete (2008), Karawani (2014), Hetterle (2015: 78–79).

ENGLISH (Declerck & Reed 2001: 183)

(1) a. *If I **knew** the truth, I would tell you.* (present counterfactual)

b. *If I **had known** what I know now, I wouldn't have appointed him.* (past counterfactual)

LEZGIAN (Haspelmath 1993: 396)

(2) *Eger* *am* *naq'* ***ata-na-j-t'a,***
if she.ABS yesterday come-AOR-PST-COND
za *am* *vokzal.d-a* *gürüšmiš* ***iji-da-j.***
1SG.ERG she.ABS station-INESS meeting do-FUT-PST
'If she had arrived yesterday, I would have met her at the station.'

The counterfactual function is especially characteristic of **pluperfects**, i.e. grams used to denote past situations "disconnected" from the present (see e.g. Plungian & van der Auwera 2006; Sičinava 2013). E.g. in English (contrary to what is often taught at schools), the Pluperfect as in (1b) is perfectly licit in counterfactual conditionals with present (3a) and even future (3b) reference (Declerck & Reed 2001: 177–182; on future counterfactuals in English see Arregui 2007, Ippolito 2003, 2013).

ENGLISH (Declerck & Reed 2001: 178, 180)

(3) a. *If I **hadn't been** in the country now, I wouldn't have been able to attend your wedding.*

b. *If you **had come** tomorrow, you wouldn't have found me at home.*

Similarly, in Lezgian the Past Aorist in counterfactual protases is used with reference not only to the past (2), but to the future as well (4).

LEZGIAN (Haspelmath 1993: 395)

(4) *Eger* *am* *paka* ***ata-na-j-t'a,***
if she.ABS tomorrow come-AOR-PST-COND
za *am* *vokzal.d-a* *gürüšmiš* ***iji-da-j.***
1SG.ERG she.ABS station-INESS meeting do-FUT-PST
'If she had arrived tomorrow, I would have met her at the station.'

NB It is essential to keep apart temporal reference and epistemicity in conditionals, see e.g. Declerck & Reed (2001) and Xrakovskij (2005).

An influential "formalist" line of thinking about this propensity of pasts and pluperfects to occur in counterfactuals stems from Iatridou (2000), see also Anand & Hacquard (2010), Ferreira (2014, 2016), among many others; cf. also Fleischmann (1989) and Dancygier (1998) for similar ideas in the cognitive-functional framework:

➢ in modal contexts, past morphemes do not express tense, but are "fake" and signal the "exclusion" of the current world from the set of worlds described by the clause.

NB Not only "fake tense", but "fake aspect" as well (Iatridou 2000, Bjorkman & Halpert 2013), cf. Italian "imperfect conditionals" denoting completed singular events:

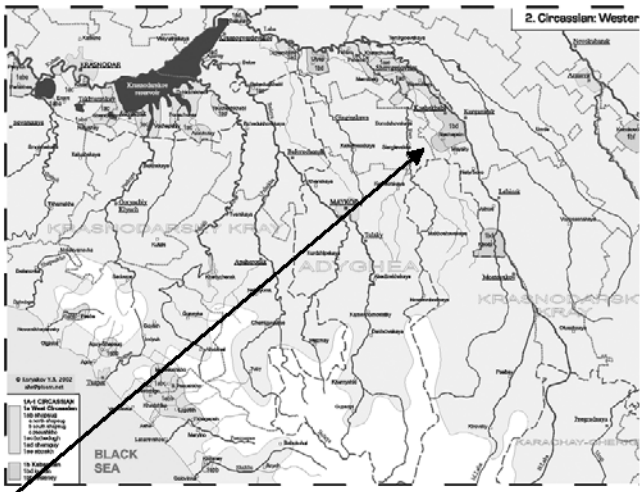
ITALIAN (Ippolito 2004: 369, ex. 19)

(5) *Se **arrivavi*** (IPF) *prima, **vedevi*** (IPF) *il film dall'inizio*.
'If you had arrived earlier, you would have seen the movie from the beginning.'

➢ In this paper I discuss counterfactual conditionals in the Kuban dialect of Kabardian (East Circassian), a polysynthetic ergative North-West Caucasian language. Without committing myself to any formal or informal framework, I will focus on the interaction of situation type, aspect and temporal reference in order to determine the role of each of these factors in the choice of marking in conditionals.

2. Circassian: a brief introduction

A branch of the North-West Caucasian (Abkhaz-Adyghe) language family, comprising two major languages (or rather groups of dialects): **Adyghe** (West Circassian) and **Kabardian** (East Circassian). The data for the current presentation comes from the Kuban dialect of Kabardian as spoken in the village Blešepsyne in the Republic of Adygeya (Russian Federation). The data has been collected during the fieldtrip organized jointly by the Russian State University of the Humanities and the National Research University "Higher School of Economics" in July 2016.



Kuban dialect
(Blešepsyne)

Important typological features of the Circassian languages:

➢ Very little distinction between major word classes (Lander & Testelets 2006).

➢ Polysynthesis: pronominal affixes expressing all arguments of the verb (S, A, P as well as various indirect objects such as recipient, benefactive, and even location, cf. e.g. Smeets 1992) and a rich system of affixes marking aspectual, temporal and modal meanings (Korotkova & Lander 2010, Lander & Letuchiy 2010, Arkadiev & Letuchiy 2011). Note that most 3rd person pronominal prefixes are null and won't be marked in the examples.

(6) *wə-q̇ə-s-č'er-jə-r-a-ʁe-wətəpŝə-č'ə-f-a-q̇əm*
2SG.ABS-DIR-1SG.IO-LOC-3SG.IO-DAT-3PL.ERG-CAUS-tie-ELAT-HBL-PST-NEG
'They could not make him untie you from me.' (elicited)

The schematic structure of the Circassian verbal complex:

prefixes									root	suffixes			
argument structure zone						pre-stem elements			stem			endings	
–10	–9	–8	–7	–6	–5	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
absolutive	directional	subordinators	applicatives	dative	ergative	jussive	dynamicity	negation	causative	root	directionals, transitivity	TAM	absolutive plural	subordinators, force

➢ Ergativity in both head- and dependent-marking (Smeets 1992, Kumakhov & Vamling 2009, Letuchiy 2012), coupled with an impoverished case system comprising only Absolutive (*-r*, marks intransitive subjects (7a) and direct objects (7b)) and Oblique (*-m*, marks transitive subjects (7b), all types of indirect objects (7b), and adnominal possessors (7c); NB personal pronouns, possessed nominals and proper names, as well as non-referential common nouns normally do not admit case marking (see Arkadiev & Testelets 2015).

(7) a. *ṣ̂ale-**r*** *me-ž’je*
boy-ABS DYN-sleep
‘The boy is sleeping.’

b. *ṣ̂ale-**m*** *pŝaŝe-**m*** *txəλə-**r*** *jə-r-jə-t-a*
boy-OBL girl-OBL book-ABS 3SG.IO-DAT-3SG.ERG-give-PST
‘The boy gave the book to the girl.’

c. *çəx^{w}ə-**m*** *jə-wəne-r*
man-OBL POSS-house-ABS
‘the man’s house’

➢ Marking of clausal subordination by means of non-finite forms, e.g. nominalizations and converbs (see e.g. Serdobolskaya 2016 on clausal complements in Adyghe and Klimenčenko 2014 on adverbial subordination in the Besleney dialect of Kabardian, closely related to and spoken in the vicinity of, the Kuban dialect).

– temporal form with the prefix *ŝ(ə)-*:

(8) ***sə-q̇ə-ŝ-jə-λaʁ^{w}ə-m*** *ʔ^{w}ənč’əbze-xe-r* *s-tər-jə-χə-ž’-a*
1SG.ABS-DIR-TEMP-3SG.ERG-see-OBL key-PL-ABS 1SG.IO-LOC-3SG.ERG-take-RE-PST
‘When he saw me, he took the keys away from me.’ (text example)

– conditional form with the suffix *-me*:

(9) *zderovje-r* ***mə-terez-me*** *p-x^{w}e-hə-ne-q̇əm.*
health-ABS NEG-in.order-COND 2SG.IO-BEN-carry-FUT-NEG
‘If your health is weak, you won’t bear (the hajj).’ (text example)

3. Conditionals and tenses in Circassian

As other Circassian languages (see e.g. Korotkova 2009 on Temirgoy Adyghe, Arkadiev 2014 on Shapsug Adyghe, Somin 2011 on Besleney Kabardian; see also Arkadiev 2017 for a general overview), Kuban Kabardian has a “two-layer” tense system (cf. Kljagina 2016):

– “Primary” tenses: Present (unmarked) ~ Preterite *-a* ~ Imperfect *-t(e)* ~ Future *-ne*

(10) a. *ž’əstune* *a* *ṣ̂ə̀pe-r* *de* *jən-u* ***d-o-ʁe-λaṗe***.
now DEM place-ABS we big-ADV 1PL.ERG-DYN-CAUS-valuable
‘Nowadays we value this place very much.’ (text example)

b. *dade-r* *mašjəne-xe-r* *ŝ-a-ŝe-m* ***qe-ḳ^{w}-a***.
grandfather-ABS car-PL-ABS LOC-3PL.ERG-sell-OBL DIR-go-PST
‘Granddad came to the place where they sold cars.’ (text example)

c. *ʁʷənеʁʷ-jə* *nəbẑеʁʷ-jə* *ja-dje* *q̇e-mə-ḳʷ-u* *ja-zaq̇ʷe* ***pso-xe-t.***
neighbour-ADD friend-ADD 3PL.IO-at DIR-NEG-go-ADV 3PL.POSS-alone live-PL-IPF
'Neither neighbours nor friends visited them, they lived alone.' (text example)

d. *we-rjə* *zegʷere-m* ***q̇ə-b-ne-sə-ne.***
you.SG-ADD once-OBL DIR-2SG.IO-LOC-reach-FUT
'This will affect you as well sometime.' (text example)

– "Secondary" tenses formed by combining two or even more tense suffixes.

The most notable "secondary" tense forms involve the Imperfect suffix *-t(e)*, which attaches to the Preterite to form the Pluperfect (11) and to the Future to form the Irrealis, thus functioning as a "retrospective shift" marker (Plungian & van der Auwera 2006: 344). Both appear in counterfactual conditionals: the Pluperfect in the protasis, and the Irrealis in the apodosis (12).

(11) *xʷəlxʷəʁ-u* *nebgər-jə-txʷ* ***də-q̇e-ne-ž'-a-te-rjə.***
male-ADV person-LNK-five 1PL.ABS-DIR-remain-RE-PST-IPF-ADD
'... and (by that time) only five had remained of us, men' (text example)

(12) *jəʁʷe-m* *wə-q̇e-ḳʷ-**a-te-me*** *dirjekterə-m* ***w-jə-ŝte-ne-t.***
on.time-OBL 2SG.ABS-DIR-go-PST-IPF-COND director-OBL 2SG.ABS-3SG.ERG-take-FUT-IPF
'If you had come on time the director would have let you in.' (elicited)

Previous analyses of conditional clauses in Circassian (Koznetsova 2009: 297–309 and Korotkova 2009: 276–277 on Temirgoy Adyghe, Orlickaja 2008 and Arkadiev 2014: 55–61 on Shapsug Adyghe, Klimenčenko 2014: 86–92 on Besleney Kabardian and Zubova 2015: 10–15 on Kuban Kabardian) have argued that the use of the Pluperfect is a feature of past counterfactual protases. Thus, for Shapsug Adyghe counterfactuals, I have proposed (Arkadiev 2014), following Iatridou (2000), that one of the two Preterite markers constituting the Pluperfect contributes past temporal reference, while the other is "fake" and serves to encode irreality, cf. (13).

SHAPSUG ADYGHE (elicited)

(13) *kːʼetːe* ***b-ʁe-že-**ʁa-ʁe-je-me*** *ʔaṣ̂ʷə* *tːə-šx-e-štə-ʁ.*
chicken 2SG.ERG-CAUS-roast-PST-PST-LNK-COND tasty 1PL.ABS-eat-AP-FUT-PST
'If you had (then) roasted a chicken, we would have had a good meal.'

The same reasoning appears to follow from the description of conditional clauses in Besleney Kabardian in Klimenčenko (2014: 86–92). In realis conditional protases tenses have their normal interpretation, cf. (14)–(15).

BESLENEY KABARDIAN (Klimenčenko 2014: 88–89)

(14) *pape* *čʼwe-r* ***jə-ʁel-a-me*** *aljə* *de-ʔapəq̇ʷ-a.*
dad fence-ABS 3SG.ERG-paint-PST-COND Ali COM-help-PST
'If dad painted the fence (yesterday), Ali helped him.'

(15) *aljə* *jə-urok-xe-r* ***jə-ṣ̂ə-ž'ə-ne-me*** *j-ane* *kanfet* *q̇ə-r-jə-tə-ne.*
Ali POSS-lesson-PL-ABS 3SG.ERG-do-RE-FUT-COND POSS-mother sweets DIR-DAT-3SG.ERG-give-FUT
'If Ali does (lit. will do) his homework, his mother will give him sweets.'

Counterfactuality is marked in both parts of the conditional by the Imperfect suffix; when it attaches to tense suffixes in the protasis the latter retain their temporal interpretation, cf. (16)–(17). Not surprisingly, in counterfactuals with present-tense reference the Imperfect is the only tense marker, and its function is irrealis, not tense, cf. (18).

BESLENEY KABARDIAN (Klimenčenko 2014: 88–89)

(16) *s-j-ane* *pš'edje* ***q̇e-ḳʷe-ne-te-me*** *se* *sə-p-je-ʁʷeč'ə-ne-t.*
1SG-POSS-mother tomorrow DIR-go-FUT-IPF-COND I 1SG.ABS-LOC-DAT-meet-FUT-IPF
'If mother were to arrive tomorrow, I would have met her.'

(17) *dəʁʷəse* *zare* *wered* ***q̇ə-ž'-jə-ʔ-a-te-me***
yesterday Zara song DIR-LOC-3SG.ERG-say-PST-IPF-COND
marjəne *gitare-m* *q̇-je-we-ne-t.*
Marina guitar-OBL DIR-DAT-hit-FUT-IPF
'If yesterday Zara had sung a song, Marina would have played the guitar.'

(18) *pŝaŝe-m* *pjəs'mo-xe-r* ***jə-tx-xe-te-me*** *ǯ'ewap* *q̇ə-r-a-tə-ž'ə-ne-t.*
girl-OBL letter-PL-ABS 3SG.ERG-write-PL-IPF-COND reply DIR-DAT-3PL.ERG-give-RE-FUT-IPF
'If the girl wrote letters, she would have received letters in response.'

➢ What is lacking in most descriptions of the Circassian conditionals, especially of the Kabardian ones, is the information on the interaction of counterfactuality with aspect and actional properties of verbs. Indeed, most if not all examples of counterfactual clauses reported so far involve telic events in the perfective aspect as in (13), (16) and (17). However, given that the secondary past tense/irrealis marking is carried out by the Imperfect, whose function as a primary tense is to mark past imperfective (durative and habitual) contexts as in (10c), the following questions arise:

– How is counterfactuality marked in imperfective (durative and habitual) contexts?

– How is counterfactuality marked with atelic (activity and state) predicates?

– Does temporal reference of conditionals interact with aspect and actionality in any non-trivial way?

4. The findings

(All subsequent examples are elicited, which is not specially marked.)
Since the doubling of the Imperfect suffix is impossible (**-te-te-me*), past imperfective counterfactuals could in principle be expressed in two ways:

a) by the Pluperfect (*-a-te-me* PST-IPF-COND), neutralizing the aspectual distinction;
b) by the Imperfect (*-te-me* IPF-COND), neutralizing the modal distinction.

Kuban Kabardian follows the second strategy:

– Past imperfective counterfactuals are strictly opposed to past perfective ones, at least with telic verbs, by means of Imperfect vs. Pluperfect, cf. (19a) vs. (19b):

(19) a. *də-q̇ə-ŝə-ḳʷ-a-te-m* *ŝhambjə* *polə-r* ***jə-pχenč'-te-me***
1PL.ABS-DIR-TEMP-go-PST-IPF-OBL Shkhambi floor-ABS 3PL.ERG-sweep-IPF-COND
wəne-m *də-ŝ-jə-ʁe-he-ne-te-q̇əm.*
house-OBL 1PL.ABS-LOC-3SG.ERG-CAUS-enter-FUT-IPF-NEG
'If Shkhambi had been sweeping the floor at the moment when we had come, he would not have let us into the house.'

b. *də-q̇ə-ŝə-ḳʷ-a-te-m* *ŝhambjə* *polə-r* ***jə-pχenč'-a-te-me***
1PL.ABS-DIR-TEMP-go-PST-IPF-OBL Shkhambi floor-ABS 3PL.ERG-sweep-PST-IPF-COND
wəne-m *də-ŝ-jə-ʁe-he-ne-te-q̇əm.*
house-OBL 1PL.ABS-LOC-3SG.ERG-CAUS-enter-FUT-IPF-NEG
'If Shkhambi had (already) swept the floor by the time we had come, he would not have let us into the house.'

– At least some of my consultants have similar intuitions with respect to atelic verbs as well, cf. (20a) vs. (20b):

(20) a. *də-ŝə-ḳʷe-ž'-a-m* *d-j-ane* ***laẑe-te-me***
1PL.ABS-TEMP-go-RE-PST-OBL 1PL-POSS-mother work-IPF-COND
də-dje *q̇ə-ṣe-č'ə-fə-ne-te-q̇əm.*
1PL-at DIR-LOC-exit-HBL-FUT-IPF-NEG
'If mother had been working when we had arrived she wouldn't have been able to come out (she would be occupied).'

b. *də-ŝə-ḳʷe-ž'-a-m* *d-j-ane* ***leẑ-a-te-me***
1PL.ABS-TEMP-go-RE-PST-OBL 1PL-POSS-mother work-PST-IPF-COND
də-dje *q̇ə-ṣe-č'ə-fə-ne-te-q̇əm.*
1PL-at DIR-LOC-exit-HBL-FUT-IPF-NEG
'If mother had (already) worked by the time of our arrival, she would not have been able to come out (she would have been too tired).'

This aspectual restriction accords well with the observation by Kljagina (2016) that the Kuban Kabardian Pluperfect does not in general occur in imperfective contexts, cf. (21):

(21) *a-r* *jəpeč'e* *pŝedgəẑ-č'e* *fade* ***je-fe-t /*je-f-a-t.***
DEM-ABS before morning-INS booze DAT-drink-IPF /*DAT-drink-PST-IPF
'In earlier times he used to drink booze in the morning (but now he doesn't have such a habit any more).' (Kljagina 2016: 20, ex. 23a)

– Conditional protases with Imperfect marking are underspecified with respect to both reality status and tense, cf. realis conditional in (22), present counterfactual in (23) and even future counterfactual in (24).

(22) *jəpeč'e* *turcije-m* ***wə-ḳʷe-te-me,***
before Turkey-OBL 2SG.ABS-go-IPF-COND
tərkʷə-bze *ṣə-z-we-mə-ʁe-çəxʷ-a-r* *λo?*
Turk-language REL.RSN-RFL.IO-2SG.ERG-NEG-CAUS-know-PST-ABS what
'If you have been to Turkey before, why didn't you learn Turkish?'

(23) *ǯ'əpstu* *weš'x* ***q̇-je-mə-š'x-te-me*** *q̇e-t-ḳʷehə-ne-t.*
now rain DIR-DAT-NEG-rain-IPF-COND DIR-1PL.ERG-go.around-FUT-IPF
'If it wasn't raining now we would have gone for a walk.'

(24) *pŝedje* ***thamexʷe–maxʷe-te-me*** *de* *də-lež'e-ne-te-q̇əm.*
tomorrow Sunday–day-IPF-COND we 1PL.ABS-work-FUT-IPF-NEG
'If tomorrow had been Sunday we wouldn't work.'

In fact, it is only the marking of the apodosis that distinguishes between realis and irrealis conditionals.

The role of situation types:

– With stative predicates the aspectual distinction appears to be neutralized: my consultants allow both Imperfect and Pluperfect in past counterfactual contexts with statives without any tangible difference in meaning, cf. (25):

(25) *dəʁʷase* *s-jə-q̇ʷeš'ə-r* *wəne-m* ***ṣe-s-te-me / ṣe-s-a-te-me***
yesterday 1SG-POSS-brother-ABS house-OBL LOC-sit-IPF-COND / LOC-sit-PST-IPF-COND
q̇ə-p-xʷə-tje-we-ne-t.
DIR-2SG.IO-BEN-LOC-hit-FUT-IPF
'If my brother had been at home yesterday he would have called you.'

This accords well with the tendency for the distinction between the perfective Preterite and the imperfective Imperfect to be neutralized with stative verbs in Circassian.

– Moreover, such neutralization is attested with dynamic atelic verbs as well, especially in past habitual contexts, where the Pluperfect is allowed even by those speakers who assign to it a perfective interpretation in episodic contexts like (20b) above:

(26) *neʁabe neχə-be.re* ***wə-ž'ej-a-te-me*** / ***wə-ž'je-te-me***
last.year more-often 2SG.ABS-sleep-PST-IPF-COND / 2SG.ABS-sleep-IPF-COND
neχ-maṣe.re w-je-zeš'ə-ne-t.
more-rarely 2SG.ABS-DAT-get.tired-FUT-IPF
'If you had slept more last year you would have been less tired.'

The Pluperfect appears to be barred from habitual contexts only with telic verbs:

(27) a. *neʁabe* ***wə-q̇ə-č'erə-mə-xʷ-te-me*** *školə-m wə-q̇ə-ṣ̂-a-xʷə-ne-te-q̇əm*
last.year 2SG.ABS-DIR-LOC-NEG-fall-IPF-COND school-OBL 2SG.ABS-DIR-LOC-3PL.ERG-drive-FUT-IPF-NEG
'If you had not (regularly / *once) arrived late last year, they would not have excluded you from school.'

b. *neʁabe* ***wə-q̇ə-č'erə-mə-xʷ-a-te-me*** *školə-m wə-q̇ə-ṣ̂-a-xʷə-ne-te-q̇əm*
last.year 2SG.ABS-DIR-LOC-NEG-fall-PST-IPF-COND school-OBL 2SG.ABS-DIR-LOC-3PL.ERG-drive-FUT-IPF-NEG
'If you had not (once / *regularly) arrived late last year, they would not have excluded you from school.'

Interim summary:

	imperfective		**perfective**
	durative	**habitual**	
telic verbs	Imperfect		Pluperfect
activities	Imperfect	Imperfect/Pluperfect	Pluperfect
states	Imperfect / Pluperfect		

5. Pluperfect: optionality vs. spread

The investigation has revealed that the use of the pluperfect is not obligatory even in past counterfactuals: as in Adyghe (see e.g. Arkadiev 2014: 56–57), the Preterite can be used in such contexts instead, cf. (28):

(28) *jəʁʷe-m* ***wə-q̇e-ḳʷ-a-me*** *djərjekterə-m w-jə-ŝte-ne-t.*
on.time-OBL 2SG.ABS-DIR-go-PST-COND director-OBL 2SG.ABS-3SG.ERG-take-FUT-IPF
'If you had come on time the director would have let you in.' — cf. (11)

Moreover, the Preterite can also replace the Imperfect with stative (29) and habitual atelic verbs (30), but not with telic verbs (31).

(29) *dəʁʷase s-jə-q̇ʷeš'ə-r wəne-m* ***ṣ̂e-s-a-me*** *q̇ə-p-xʷə-tje-we-ne-t.*
yesterday 1SG-POSS-brother-ABS house-OBL LOC-sit-PST-COND DIR-2SG.IO-BEN-LOC-hit-FUT-IPF
'If my brother had been at home yesterday he would have called you.' — cf. (25)

(30) *jəλes-ḳʷ-a-m neχə-be.re* ***wə-ž'ej-a-me*** *neχ-maṣe.re w-je-zeš'ə-ne-t.*
year-go-PST-OBL more-often 2SG.ABS-sleep-PST-COND more-rarely 2SG.ABS-DAT-get.tired-FUT-IPF
'If you had slept more last year you wouldn't have been less tired.' — cf. (26)

(31) *#səhatə-r ṭʷə-m swande sup* ***jə-ʁe-ɤ-a-me***
hour-ABS two-OBL Swande soup 3SG.ERG-CAUS-boil-PST-COND
jə-peš'ə-m tjeljevizerə-r xe-ʁe-ne-ʁe-ne-te-q̇əm.
POSS-room-OBL television-ABS LOC-CAUS-be.lit-RES-FUT-IPF-NEG
'If at two o'clock Swande had already finished cooking (*had been cooking) soup, the TV-set in her room couldn't have been turned on.'

Such a use of the Preterite seems to be the minor option, but it is robustly attested even if not all speakers accept it in all contexts. This probably shows that the use of the Pluperfect in counterfactuals is perceived by the speakers as somehow redundant. Note that just

like the Imperfect, the Preterite does not unambiguously mark the protasis as counterfactual, cf. (32) with a realis conditional:

(32) *ruslan* ***ɻe-ḳʷ-a-me*** *sebranije-r* *je-d-ʁe-ẑe-n.*
Ruslan DIR-go-PST-COND meeting-ABS DAT-2PL.ERG-CAUS-begin-POT
'If Ruslan has come, let's begin the meeting.'

On the other hand, there is a clearly observable spread of the Pluperfect to non-past (including future) contexts, testifying to its becoming a default marker of counterfactuality *per se*, regardless of temporal reference, cf. (33)–(34).

(33) *ǯ'əstʊne* *s-jə-ɻʷeš'ə-r* *wəne-m* ***ṣ̂e-s-a-te-me***
now 1SG-POSS-brother-ABS house-OBL LOC-sit-PST-IPF-COND
jə-peš'ə-m *ŝhenʁʷəbǯ'e-r* *ʔʷə-x-a-we* *ŝə-tə-ne-t.*
POSS-room-OBL window-ABS LOC-open-RES-ADV LOC-stand-FUT-IPF
'If my brother had been at home now, the window in his room would have been open.'

(34) *tha wjəʁepso* *nobe* *aχš'e-r* *ɻə-zerə-z-e-p-t-a-m-č'e*
thanks today money-ABS DIR-REL.FCT-1SG.IO-DAT-2SG.ERG-give-PST-OBL-INS
awe *pŝedje-jə* ***ɻə-z-e-p-t-a-te-me*** *deʁʷe-ne-t.*
but tomorrow-ADD DIR-1SG.IO-DAT-2SG.ERG-give-PST-IPF-COND good-FUT-IPF
'Thanks for giving me money today, but if you had given them to me tomorrow, it would have also been fine.'

Cf. a similar development in English illustrated above, and the discussion in Dahl (1997).

6. Conclusions

Marking of counterfactuality in Kuban Kabardian (and, *mutatis mutandis*, most probably in other Kabardian varieties as well) is achieved by means of a non-trivial interplay of actionality, aspect and tense:

- The Imperfect *-t(e)* serves as a marker of counterfactuality *par excellence* only in non-past contexts and, as part of the complex Pluperfect, in past perfective (and some habitual) contexts; in most imperfective contexts the Imperfect does not specify either reality status or temporal reference.
- Given that the Imperfect *-t(e)* forms part of the Pluperfect, which in its independent uses is largely limited to perfective contexts (e.g. anterior in the past or annuled result), as opposed to imperfective contexts (e.g. past habitual situations no longer holding at present, as in (21)), where the "bare" Imperfect appears, there is no reason to consider the use of Imperfect in counterfactuals "fake" — at least, it is no more "fake" than its use in the Pluperfect in general.
- The use of the Imperfect marker as a secondary temporal/modal operator inducing counterfactual interpretation is non-obligatory even in past perfective counterfactuals, where the simple Preterite can appear instead.
- Temporal reference seems to be the less important parameter in the marking of irrealis conditionals in Kuban Kabardian: all of the markers surveyed, even the Pluperfect, are in principle compatible with past, present and future interpretations; with respect to the Pluperfect this points towards its development into a specialized marker of counterfactuality.
- By contrast, the aspectual distinctions (perfective vs. imperfective, and, in the latter, durative vs. habitual), as well as the actional ones (telic vs. atelic), constrain the morphological expression of counterfactuality in important ways.

Abbreviations

ABS — absolutive; ADD — additive; ADV — adverb; AOR — aorist; AP — antipassive; BEN — benefactive; CAUS — causative; COM — comitative; COND — conditional; DAT — dative; DEM — demonstrative; DIR — directional; DYN — dynamic; ELAT — elative; ERG — ergative; FCT — factive; FUT — future; HBL — habilitive; INESS — inessive; INS — instrumental; IO — indirect object; IPF — imperfect; LNK — linker; LOC — locative; NEG — negation; OBL — oblique; PL — plural; POSS — possessive; POT — potential; PST — past; RE — refactive; REL — relativizer; RES — resultative; RFL — reflexive; RSN — reason; SG — singular; TEMP — temporal.

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