Like many languages of the world (James 1982, Dahl 1997, Iatridou 2000, Bjorkman & Halpert 2013, Karawani 2014, Hetterle 2015: 78–79), the polysynthetic Circassian languages of the North-West Caucasian family employ past tense morphology in counterfactual conditionals. In Kabardian, counterfactual apodoses are invariably marked by the combination of the Future -ne with the Past Imperfective (IPF) -t(e), while protases, in addition to the general conditional suffix -me, show a variety of forms depending on the temporal reference, aspectual interpretation and eventuality type. This paper focuses on the interaction of tense and aspect in counterfactual protases in the Kuban dialect of Kabardian; the elicited data has been collected in the village Blešepsane (Republic of Adygheya, Russia) in 2016.

In present counterfactuals, IPF appears in both parts of the conditional (1), while in past counterfactual protases with completive meaning IPF attaches to the (perfective) Preterite marker -a (2).

(1) ǯ'əpstu weš’x .qq-e-mə-š’x-te-me  qe-t-kʷeho-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.’

(2) jəʁʷ-e-m wa-ə-ke-’a-te-me  dirjekterə-m w-jə-šte-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.’

This looks like a classic case of “fake imperfective” (Iatridou 2000, Bjorkman & Halpert 2013, Ferreira 2014, 2016), however, things are more complicated. First, the Kabardian IPF by itself is incompatible with perfective interpretation in conditionals: when combined with non-stative verbs, IPF yields a progressive or habitual reading (1); this obtains regardless of actual temporal reference, cf. a past habitual conditional (3), where the PST+IPF form required in the perfective (2) is ungrammatical.

(3) newabe wa-ə-’ač’erə<mg> xe’-(’a)-te-me školə-m wa-ə-š-a-xʷne-te-ʼəm
last.year 2SG.ABS-<NEG>be.late-IPF-COND school-OBL 2SG.ABS-LOC-3PL.ERG-drive-FUT-IPF-NEG
‘If you hadn’t regularly arrived late last year they wouldn’t have excluded you from school.’

Second, the IPF by itself does not unambiguously signal counterfactuality: if the apodosis is not marked as counterfactual, the combination of IPF with the conditional can have realis reading, as in (4).

(4) japeč’e turcije-m wa-kʷe-te-me,
before Turkey-OBL 2SG.ABS-go -IPF-COND
tarkʷoblze ʃə-z-we-mə-čaxʷ-a-r ḫo?
Turkish REL.RSN-RFL.IO-2SG.ABS-caus-know-PST-ABS what
‘If you have been to Turkey before, why didn’t you learn Turkish?’

Such a flexibility may be due to the morphological restriction on the doubling of IPF marker; it finds a parallel in the temporal (but not aspectual!) flexibility of Italian imperfect conditionals (Ippolito 2004).

Third, the use of IPF as a “secondary” marker in past counterfactual protases is optional: in contexts like (2) the Preterite is also acceptable (5).

(5) jəʁʷ-e-m wa-ə-ke-’a-me  dirjekterə-m w-jə-šte-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.’

On the other hand, the combination PST+IPF marks counterfactuality in perfective contexts not only with past (2), but also with future temporal reference (6), like in English or Italian (Ippolito 2003, 2004, Arregui 2007).

(6) pśedje-jo  qə-z-e-p-t-a-te-me  dewʷ-e-ne-t.
tomorrow-ADD DIR-1SG.IO-DAT-2SG.GERG-give-PST-IPF-COND good-FUT-IPF
‘If you had given it to me tomorrow, it would have been better.’
Finally, subtle differences are observed in the behaviour of telic and atelic verbs as well as between durative and habitual contexts. The observed distribution of temporal forms in counterfactual protases (with two lacunae in the data) is summarized in the table.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>perfective</th>
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<td>atelic</td>
<td>IPF</td>
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<td>PST-IPF / FUT-IPF</td>
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<td></td>
<td>atelic</td>
<td>IPF / PST(-IPF) / FUT-IPF</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Thus marking of counterfactuality in Kuban Kabardian conditional protases is primarily sensitive to actionality and aspect, rather than to temporal reference, and is modally unambiguous only in perfective contexts.

**Abbreviations**

ABS — absolutive; ADD — additive; CAUS — causative; COND — conditional; DAT — dative; DIR — directional preverb; ERG — ergative; FUT — future; IO — indirect object; IPF — imperfect; LOC — locative preverb; NEG — negation; OBL — oblique; PL — plural; PST — past; REL — relativizer; RFL — reflexive; RSN — reason; SG — singular.

**References**


