Western Mari conditionals and TAM clusters
Anastasia Gareyshina

Overview. In this presentation, my goal is to show that Western Mari counterfactuals of the Kuznetsovo dialect (< Mari < Uralic) show unusual Aspect and Tense properties within their verbal complexes. The relevant examples are drawn from own fieldwork data in the village of Kuznetsovo (Pěšäknën), the republic of Mari El, in summer and fall of 2016. I demonstrate available strategies to put together a counterfactual and propose analysis much along the lines of (Iatridou 2000), which states that what is observed in counterfactuals cross-linguistically is rather fake Aspect than real. In doing so, I explore verbal clusters, TAM information they convey, and ways to compose them. I come to the conclusion that in Kuznetsovo Western Mari counterfactuals, a similar role is played by fake Tense that serves to make differences regarding Aspect.

Data. Examples in (1)-(4) show ways in which counterfactuals can be composed. First, in example (1), there is a dedicated counterfactual verb form "ə̈lgec-" ("be-COND-PST1.3SG"), which is, however, perceived as frozen, in the absence of synthetic conditional verb forms. This form is invariant and occupies the final position in the sentence. Second, the aforementioned counterfactual verb form can be replaced with arguably interchangeable verb forms 'ə̈l'/ə̈l" ("be:NARR.3SG" / "be.PST2.3SG"), obligatorily combined with the standard conditional conjunction 'gën' ("if") (cf. (2)). Other options for protasis, as listed in (Riese 1984), are largely unavailable, i.e. standard verb form in past or non-past tense alone lacks counterfactual conditional interpretation. Note that in their morphological make-up, Western Mari counterfactual conditions are void of any future tense. Third, apodosis has to take on the same two verb forms 'ə̈l'/ə̈l" in addition to its verb, be it in past or non-past tense (examples (1)-(2) becoming immediately ungrammatical without counterfactuals in the absence of such marking in apodosis). Fourth, in (1), it can be observed that 'ə̈l" is less usual than 'ə̈l", which can be attributed to differences in their root uses (cf. (Mordashova 2016)). Fifth, a parallelism in verb forms is strongly preferred, 'ə̈l" in protasis followed by 'ə̈l" in apodosis, the same symmetry holding for 'ə̈l" (cf. (2)). Further, we show that present and past counterfactuals are due to combination of the tense feature on the lexical verb and the chosen 'ə̈l" / 'ə̈l" verb form, only the combination of the past tense and 'ə̈l" invariably resulting in interpreting a counterfactual as the past counterpart (cf. example (3)). Examples in (4) show the contrast between a non-past form of a lexical verb and a past one, actually being the difference between an imperfective and a perfective aspect, respectively.

Analysis. Based on usage of adverbials in counterfactuals and continuations as suggested in (Iatridou 2000), we show that protasis is truly future-oriented, and this is due to the counterfactual 'auxiliaries', i.e. 'ə̈lgec-" /'ə̈l" /'ə̈l". And we analyze Western Mari conditionals as in (Iatridou 2000), that is, "the topic worlds [the ones we are talking about] exclude the actual world [the world of the speaker]" — only with modification so as to incorporate the intuition that non-past lexical verb morphology encodes imperfective, whereas its past morphology conveys perfective. I.e. in the case of Kuznetsovo Western Mari counterfactuals, it is not aspect that is fake, but it is tense that obscures aspectual meaning.

Examples.

(1) məŋ’ ves xala-škə vanž-ən-əm ə̈lgec-ə
    LNOM another town-ILL relocate-PST2-1SG be-COND-PST1.3SG
u täng-vlä-m voj-en-əm
new friend-PL-ACC find-PST2-1SG
be.PST2.3SG/be.NARR.3SG
'If I relocated to another town, I would find new friends.'

(2) a. məŋ’ ves xala-škə vanž-ən-əm ə̈lə
    LNOM another town-ILL relocate-PST2-1SG be.NARR.3SG if
u täng-vlä-m voj-en-əm
new friend-PL-ACC find-PST2-1SG
be.PST2.3SG/be.NARR.3SG
ə̈l-ə *(gən’),

b. məŋ’ ves xala-škə vanž-ən-əm ə̈lə
    LNOM another town-ILL relocate-PST2-1SG be.NARR.3SG if
u täng-vlä-m voj-en-əm
new friend-PL-ACC find-PST2-1SG
be.PST2.3SG/be.NARR.3SG
ə̈lə *(gən’),

be.PST2.3SG/be.NARR.3SG
ə̈lə *(gən’),
Intended: ‘If I relocated to another town, I would find new friends.’

(3) a. mən’ ves xala-škə vanž-ăn-əm ʒl̩ə̈
    I.NOM another town-ILL relocate-PST2-1SG be.NARR.3SG
    gən’, u täng-vlä-m voj-en-ām ʒl̩ə̈
    if new friend-PL-ACC find-PST2-1SG be.NARR.3SG
b. %mən’ ves xala-škə vanž-ăn-əm ʒl̩ə̈
    I.NOM another town-ILL relocate-PST2-1SG be.NARR.3SG
    gən’, u täng-vlä-m voj-en-ām ʒl̩ə̈
    if new friend-PL-ACC find-PST2-1SG be.PST2.3SG
c. %mən’ ves xala-škə vanž-ăn-əm ʒl̩ə̈
    I.NOM another town-ILL relocate-PST2-1SG be.PST2.3SG
    gən’, u täng-vlä-m voj-en-ām ʒl̩ə̈
    if new friend-PL-ACC find-PST2-1SG be.PST2.3SG
d. Okmən’ ves xala-škə vanž-ăn-əm ʒl̩ə̈
    I.NOM another town-ILL relocate-PST2-1SG be.PST2.3SG
    gən’, u täng-vlä-m voj-en-ām ʒl̩ə̈
    if new friend-PL-ACC find-PST2-1SG be.PST2.3SG

Intended: ‘If I had relocated to another town, I would have found new friends.’

(4) a. mən’ ekzämen-eš jämdel-ält-əm ʒl̩-gec-ə,
    I.NOM exam-LAT prepare-REFL-NPST.1SG be-COND-PST1.3SG
    kn’igä ləd-mə godəm a.m amal-ə ʒl̩ə̈
    book read-PRTCP.ACT while AUX.NEG.PRS.1SG sleep-CN be.PST2.3SG
    ‘If I had been studying for an exam, I would not have fallen asleep reading a book.’
b. mən’ ekzämen-eš jažo-n jamdel-ält-en-əm ʒl̩ə̈
    I.NOM exam-LAT good-ADV prepare-REFL-PST2-1SG
    ʒl̩-gec-ə, mən’ təm.d-əəšə dokə pər-əə
    be-COND-PST1.3SG I.NOM learn.CAUS-PRTCP.ACT to come.in-INF
    a.m lüd ʒl̩ə̈
    AUX.NEG.PRS.1SG fear-CN be.PST2.3SG
    ‘If I had studied for the exam well, I would not be afraid of coming to the teacher.’

References.