Aspect in the Present Tense in Kazakh: Auxiliaries and their Delineation

Jonathan North Washington
University of Washington
jonwash@u.washington.edu

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1 The Problem

There are four auxiliaries used commonly in Kazakh to indicate the present tense: ***jatır*** *'lie'* (1a), ***jür*** *'go'* (1b), ***tur*** *'stand'* (1c), and ***otır*** *'sit'*(1d).

(1) a. ***Üy–ge kel–e   jatır–mın***
          home–DAT come–presPART lie–1st.sg
          "I'm coming home."

  b. ***Üy–ge kel–ip   jür–min***
          home–DAT come–presPART go–1st.sg
          "I come home [e.g., every day]."

  c. ***Ol qazir bastıq–qa sen–ip   tur***
          he now   boss–DAT   believe–pastPART stand
          "He believes his boss right now."

  d. ***Şay iş–ip   otır–mın***
          tea   drink–pastGER sit–1st.sg
          "I am drinking tea."

In addition, the simple present tense, while often used for future tense (2a), retains some present tense usage in Kazakh (2b).

(2) a. ***Üy–ge   kel–e–min***
          home–DAT come–presPART–1st.sg
          "I will come home."

  b. ***Ol bastıq–qa sen–e–di***
          he boss–DAT   believe–presPART–3rd
          "He believes his boss."

The goals of this paper are:

- To find some formalisable way to examine the various present tense forms

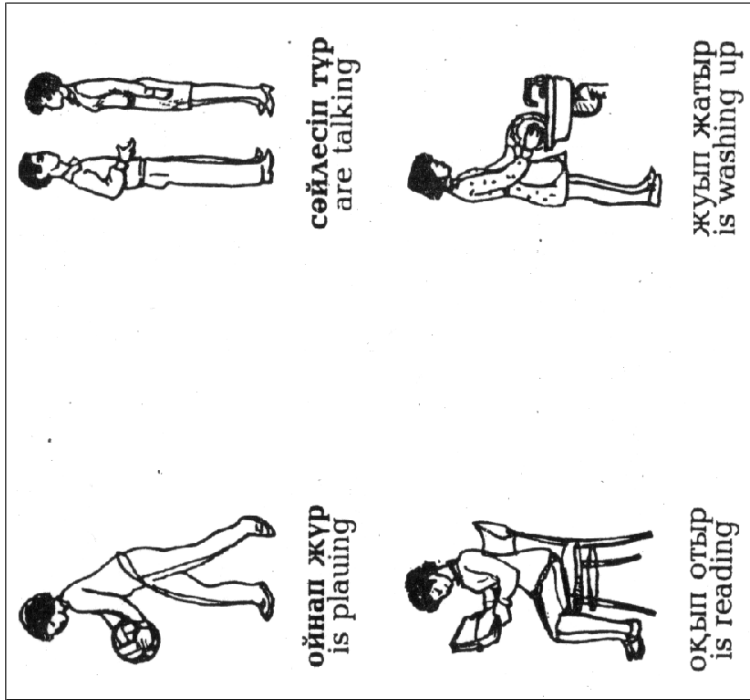- To determine what the differences are

Correspondingly, in brief, this paper:

- Determines that looking at the lexical aspect of the main verbs which each form patterns with gives hints as to the aspectual properties of the forms, which puts one on the track to an effective way of teasing apart the meanings of the individual froms.

- Provides an analysis of the different forms—which has been becoming more internally consistent and more inclusive of available data.

2   Previous Analyses

Several superficial differences between Kazakh's present tense forms have been pointed out in existing literature:

- No useful explanation is offered (Somfai Kara (2002), Kubaeva (2003), etc.)

- Ascribed vaguely to aspectual properties (Kirchner (1998), Bekturova & Bekturov (1996)—see figure 1(b), Krippes (1996), and Demirci (2003))

    + Begins to extract some of the main differences
    − Not a full account

- Auxiliaries ranked based on the relative length of temporal frame which they express (source unknown): *jür* > *jatır* > *otır* > *tur*

    + Seems right, at least superficially
    − Doesn't explain all of the differences
    − How could this be formalised?

- Auxiliary indicates position in which event is performed—e.g., figure 1(a)

    + This is part of the picture
    − Not a full account, problematic
        * The first three illustrations in figure 1(a) literally depict the position suggested by the auxiliary used (*jür* "*going*," *tur* "*standing*," and *otır* "*sitting*"), but the last illustration, using *jatır*, does not depict an event being performed lying down.
        * Many examples exist where the auxiliary says nothing about the position in which the event is performed.
        * All example events provided are activities.

The form of the Compound Present Tense has different shades of meaning. It depends on the usage of one of the verbs: **отыр, тұр, жүр, жатыр.**

1. **Отыр** denotes an action taking place at the moment of speaking (when the subject is sitting): *Әділ кітап оқып отыр.* „Adil is reading a book". *Кәрім шай ішіп отыр.* „Karim is having tea".

2. **Тұр** attaches the character of repetition to the action taking place at the given moment (or when the subject is standing): *Екі адам сөйлесіп тұр.* „Two men are speaking". (standing).

Ол маған қарап тұр „He is looking at me" (the definite period of time). *Сен маған келіп тұр.* „Come to me" (repetition).

3. **Жатыр** attaches the constant character to the action and points to its duration: *Айгүл институтта оқып жатыр* „Aigul studies at the Institute (continues to study at the present moment). In this case it may be translated into English by the Present Indefinite. *Мен келе жатырмын* "I am going" (now).

4. **Жүр** also points to the constant character of the action or its repetition: *Айгүл институтта оқып жүр* „Aigul studies at the Institute". In this case the two verbs are very close in their meaning. The difference is very slight. **Жүр** is more concrete.

(b) Explanation of illustrations

сөйлесіп тұр
are talking

жуып жатыр
is washing up

ойнап жүр
is plauing

оқып отыр
is reading

(a) Illustration of the four auxiliaries

Figure 1: Excerpts from Bekturova & Bekturov (1996, 67-68)

3 The Theoretical Framework

Rothstein (2004) discusses the classic Vendlerian (Vendler, 1957, 1967) verb classes: states, activities, achievements, and accomplishments (see also Dowty (1979)). A verb (or verb phrase) may be classified as one of these event types based on the properties of the event in question:

- **telicity**—whether or not the event has an end-point

- **stages**—whether or not multiple stages exist as part of the event

Rothstein (2004, 12) applies the features [±telic] and [±stages] to lexical classes, in the following way—Comrie's equivalent event types are provided for reference:

	[±stages]	[±telic]	Comrie
States	-	-	stative
Activities	+	-	dynamic
Achievements	-	+	punctual
Accomplishments	+	+	telic

Table 1: A Distinctive Feature Analysis of Lexical Aspect

- **states** are events which have no endpoint or stages, such as *know*, *believe*, *desire*, etc. (Rothstein, 2004, 6).

- **activities** are events with stages, but no general endpoint: *walk*, *swim*, *push a cart*, etc.

- **achievements** have no stages, and the endpoint makes up almost the entire event: *recognise*, *find*, *die*, etc.

- **accomplishments** involve an endpoint and stages, and include phrases such as *paint a picture*, *write a book*, and *deliver a sermon*.

4 The Differences

Given the tools of lexical aspect and the breakdown thereof by feature, the uses of Kazakh's simple present tense and quartet of auxiliaries used for the present tense may be delineated along the lines of lexical aspect of the verb phrases they select.

4.1 The Simple Present Tense

The simple present tense in Kazakh has three basic uses:

- With states ([+telic,-stages]), it's conveys nonprogressive aspect (see Comrie (1976, Ch. 1.2)):

(3) **Ol   bastıq–qa sen–e–di**
3rd.sg boss–DAT   believe–presPART–3rd

"*S/he believes his/her boss.*"

- With definite telic events (achievements and accomplishments which can't be broken down into multiple sub-events), the simple present conveys future tense (4a), and with indefinite telic events (which can be broken down into multiple sub-events), it conveys a habitual (cf. Comrie (1976, 30-31)), which can be iterative (4b) or noniterative (4c):

(4) a. **Men alma–nı   je–y–min**
I   apple–ACC.DEF eat–presPART–1st.sg

"*I'm going to eat the apple.*"

  b. **Men alma–lar je-y-min**
I   apple–PL   eat–presPART–1st.sg

"*I eat apples.*"

  c. **Men alma–lar künde je–y–min**
I   apple–PL   daily   eat–presPART–1st.sg

"*I eat apples daily.*"

- Achievements ([+telic,-stages]) show a similar break-down with the simple present, when an indefinite form which can be either iterative habitual or future (5a), and a definite form can only be future (5b):

(5) a. **Men kilt–ter–im   joğalt–a–mın**
I   key–PL–POSS.1st.sg–ACC.DEF lose–presPART–1st.sg

"*I lose my keys*" (e.g. "*every day*"), "*I will lose my keys*"

  b. **Men kilt–ter–im–di   künde joğalt–a–mın**
I   key–PL–POSS.1st.sg–ACC.DEF daily   lose–presPART–1st.sg

"*I lose my keys every day.*"

4.2   *jatır* – 'lie'

Jatır is used to convey progressive aspect; as such, its use is restricted to events with stages (when used with non-staged events, it coërces stages).

- With **activities** ([-telic,+stages], ex. 6) and **accomplishments** ([+telic,+stages], ex. 7) to indicate progressive aspect:

(6) **Men qazir jügir–ip   jatır–mın**
I   now   run–pastPART lie–1st.sg

"*I'm running right now.*"

(7) **Men qazir alma je–p   jatır–mın**
I   now   apple eat–pastPART lie–1st.sg
"*I'm eating an apple right now.*"

- With **states** ([-telic,-stages]) and **achievements** ([+telic,-stages]) only to coërce [+stages], just as use of the progressive does in English.[1] **States** become **activities** (8) and **achievements** become **accomplishments** (9):

(8) **Palaw   oğan   qazir una–p   jatır**
plov (a rice dish) 3rd.sg.DAT now   like–pastPART lie

"*He likes plov right now,*" "*He is sitting at the table and enjoying having plov for lunch or dinner.*"

(9) **Ata–sı   qazir öl–ip   jatır**
grandfather–POS.3rd.sg now   die–pastPART lie

"*His grandfather is dying right now.*"

4.3   *jür* – 'go'

Jür generally indicates habitual aspect.

- With **activities** ([-telic,+stages]) and **accomplishments** ([+telic,+stages]), *jür* conveys an iterative habitual aspect:

(10) **Men künde biyle–p   jür–min**
I   daily   dance–pastPART go–1st.sg

"*I dance every day.*" (i.e., "*I've been going dancing. [I've started lessons and go every day.]*")

(11) **Bir sağat jügir–ip   jür**
one hour   run–pastPART go

"*S/he's (been) running for an hour.*"

(12) **Kitap jaz–ıp   jür–min**
book   write–pastPART go–1st.sg

"*I'm writing a book.*" (i.e., "*I started writing a book; I've been writing and doing research for it, and will finish at some undetermined point in the future.*")

- It adds to **states** ([-telic,-stages]), an aspectual property of persistence, akin to non-iterative habitual:

(13) a. **Oğan   una–p   jür–min**
3rd.sg.DAT like–pastPART go–1st.sg

"*S/he likes me.*" (i.e., "*S/he has liked me for a certain amount of time.*")

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[1]I have very sparse data on the use of *jatır* with states and achievements.

b. ***Oğan   bas–ı   awr–ıp   jür***
    3rd.sg.DAT head–POSS.3rd hurt–pastPART go

    "*His/her head has been hurting.*"

- Despite a lack of native-speaker data for the use of ***jür*** with **achievements**, it speculatively functions as a non-iterative habitual.

4.4 *tur* – 'stand'

The auxiliary ***tur*** is used as follows:

- With **states** ([-telic,-stages]), to show that the event is occuring *now* (14) or during some period of time (15):

(14) a. ***Ol bastıq–qa sen–e–di***
       he boss–DAT   believe–presPART–3rd

       "*He believes his boss.*"

      b. ***Ol qazir bastıq–qa sen–ip   tur***
       he now   boss–DAT   believe–pastPART stand

       "*He believes his boss right now.*"

(15) a. ***Oğan   una–p   tur–mın***
       3rd.sg.DAT like–pastPART stand–1st.sg

       "*S/he likes me* [e.g., *during some period of time, such as 'right now'*]."

      b. ***Oğan   bas–ı   awr–ıp   tur***
       3rd.sg.DAT head–POSS.3rd hurt–pastPART stand

       "*His/her head hurts* [e.g., *right now*]."

- With **achievements** ([+telic,-stages]) to show that the endpoint that constitutes the achievement is occuring *now*, and practically coërces stages in so doing:

(16) a. ***Biz taw   töbe–si–ne   künde jet–e–miz***
       we   mountain peak–POS.3rd–DAT daily   reach–presPART–1st.pl
       "*We reach the summit of the mountain every day.*"

      b. ***Biz taw   töbe–si–ne   qazir jet–ip   tur–mız***
       we   mountain peak–POS.3rd–DAT now   reach–pastPART stand–1st.pl
       "*We are reaching the summit of the mountain right now.*"

- Occasionally[2] with **activities** ([-telic,+stages]), to show that the activity is being performed in a standing position; except possibly for a adding a more focussed immediacy to the connotation, its use is in all other ways similar to that of ***jatır***:

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[2]I have few examples of ***tur*** with activities because most of the activities that I elicited involved verbs of motion, which cannot be carried out standing [in Kazakh]. ***Süwret sal*** (lit. "*put a picture*") is a light verb meaning "*draw;*" it should not have an accomplishment reading of "*draw a picture.*"

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(17)   a.   ***Ol   süwret   sal–ıp   jatır***
              s/he picture/drawing put–pastPART lie

              "*S/he's drawing.*"

   b.   ***Ol   süwret   sal–ıp   tur***
              s/he picture/drawing put–pastPART stand

              "*S/he's drawing standing.*"

- With **accomplishments** ([+telic,+stages]), to convey a progressive meaning like *jatır*, with the added connotation of either a standing position or of a sort of immediacy:

(18)   ***Men qazir alma jep   tur–mın***
       I   now   apple eat–pastPART stand–1st.sg

       "*I'm eating an apple (standing / right) now.*"

(19)   **?*Men qazir xat–tı   jaz–ıp   tur–mın***
       I   now   letter–ACC write–pastPART stand–1st.sg

       "*I'm writing the letter (standing / right) now.*"

- The immediacy which makes ***tur*** different from ***jatır*** could be explained by saying that ***tur*** focusses on one stage from a staged event and makes unstaged events into one stage.

4.5   *otır* – 'sit'

The auxiliary ***otır*** is used as follows:

- With **activities** ([+stages,-telic], 20) and **accomplishments** ([+stages,+telic], 21), indicates progressive aspect with the added information of sitting:[3]

(20)   ***Süwret sal–ıp   otır***
       picture   put–pastPART sit

       "*S/he's (sitting and) drawing.*"

(21)   ***Men qazir alma je–p   otır–mın***
       I   now   apple eat–pastPART sit–1st.sg

       "*I'm (sitting and) eating an apple now.*"

- With **states** ([-stages,-telic]) and **achievements**([-stages,+telic]), rare, but like ***jatır***, can coërce a progressive reading (i.e., [+stages]), but with the added notion

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[3]The verb ***otır*** is largely unattested in my data with activities, apparently due to the fact that most of the activities that I elicited involved movement (e.g., *dance, swim, run*), which are not naturally carried out sitting.

of the event being performed in a seated position (ex. 22;[4] cf. 15a), or can add the aspectual nuance of the event having already begun (ex. 23; cf. 13b, 15b):

(22) **Oğan**   **una–p**   **otır–mın**
      3rd.sg.DAT like–pastPART sit–1st.sg

      "*S/he is liking me (right now, and I am sitting).*"

(23) **Oğan**   **bas–ı**   **awr–ıp**   **otır**
      3rd.sg.DAT head–POSS.3rd hurt–pastPART sit

      "*His/her head hurts* [e.g., *right now, and has for some time*]."

- The aspectual properties which make **otır** different from **jatır** could be summarised by saying that events coupled with **otır** necessarily have a beginning to them.

5   Codifying the Differences

Table 2 summarises the differences in use between the five present tenses in Kazakh, as determined by this study.

	states *like, believe*	achievements *find, die, reach*	activities *dance, run, draw*	accomplishments *eat an apple*
$\pm$stages	−	−	+	+
$\pm$telic	−	+	−	+
simple present	future (def), habitual	habitual, future	future (def), habitual	habitual, future
jatır – '*lie*'	coërces progressive (+stages)		progressive	
jür – '*go*'	non-iterative habitual	habitual	non-iterative habitual	habitual
tur – '*stand*'	immediate progressive, coërces standing progressive		immediate progressive, standing progressive	
otır – '*sit*'	progressive with onset, coërces sitting progressive		progressive with onset, sitting progressive	

Table 2: Breakdown of Kazakh Present Tense

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[4]The provided example is the only such example in my dataset.

6 Closing Thoughts

6.1 Summary

What I claim:

- The differences among the verbs of the present tense verbal quartet in Kazakh can be explained through lexical aspect. Table 2 shows the results of this.

- Not only is lexical aspect crucial for considering this problem, but it is evident that an analysis which divides the aspectual categories along the features [±stages] and [±telic] provides a convenient way to approach it. See table 2.

    - This has been becoming less crucial to a good analysis.

6.2 What's Left

Some of the fomalisations are inadequate in that they don't fit standard aspectual descriptions:

- *otır* as a progressive with a beginning point

- *tur* as a single-staged progressive

- the simple present as consistently alternating between habitual and future

- the use of the simple present and *jür* with telic events both express habituality, yet differently

Further elicitations and evaluation could provide more comprehensive and specific generalisations about:

- the aspectual nuances of each form,

- the uses of the auxiliary quartet in other tenses,

- the productivity of the descriptive function of the `participle + helping verb` construction in Kazakh (e.g., "*jep otır*" – "*eat sitting*"; ?"*jep uş-*" – "*eat flying*").[5]

- effects of agency on the use of the forms

There is some speculation about the quartet of auxiliares having ingressive origins; this should also be investigated.

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[5]Thanks to Andrew Nevins for suggesting this possibility.

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