The marking of future time reference in Züritüütsch

Bickel, Balthasar

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Future from the fringes: the marking of future time reference in Züritüütsch

Balthasar Bickel

Cognitive Anthropology Research Group Nijmegen
and Universität Zürich

O. Preamble

Züritüütsch\(^1\) is a Swiss German dialect spoken in the town of Zürich and its surroundings. Swiss German dialects generally lack a future marking device in the core of their grammars. There are, however, some phenomena in the periphery of Züritüütsch grammar that contribute to the coding of future time. Often, these phenomena are reminiscent of neighbouring dialects and languages (see Szadrowsky (1930: 114ff et passim) on High Allemanic dialects and Ebneter (1973, 1978) on Rhaeto-Romance and its neighbours). Züritüütsch itself has been described by Albert Weber (Weber 1987), who is, however, often deliberately normative.

My orthography is based on the system developed by Eugen Dieth (Dieth 1986). In this system the numerous sandhi rules are not applied. Therefore, what surfaces e.g. as ['væmmar 's æf] is written wän d mer sääisch... (literally 'if you tell me', i.e. 'if you tell me...'). In most syntactic environments, many words ending in a vowel receive a 'linking' /n/ or /r/ to avoid hiatus. Here, I follow the practice of the Schweizerisches Idiotikon and write a superscribed n or r, e.g. ich schriibe\(^n\) de brief [ix'ʃrɪ:bjɔ:də 'bɾɪəf] 'I write the letter' and ich schriibe\(^n\) en brief [ix'ʃrɪ:bjɔ:nən 'bɾɪəf] 'I write a letter'.

1. Marking of future time reference

The verbal system of Züritüütsch shows a binary tense split with an equipollent opposition between Past and Non-Past.\(^2\) Besides free temporal deixis (with dän 'then', moorn 'tomorrow', bald 'soon' etc.) the only productive way of marking future time reference is bound to copular constructions. They will be dealt with in section 17. The cognate of High German future auxiliary werden, marks inference or presumption when used with infinitives:

\[
\text{(1) a. Er wiirt en Brief schriibe\(^n\).} \quad \text{[FTRQ: 1]}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{he} & \quad \text{EVID:3s} & \text{INDEFsM} & \text{letter} & \text{write} \\
\text{'Presumably, he writes / will write a letter.'}
\end{align*}
\]

For writing, Standard High German, which is acquired early in school, is used throughout non-Romance Switzerland. In oral form, this variety is ubiquitous in German and sometimes present in Swiss radio and television. Due to this diglossia,
there are many loan constructions affecting Züritüütsch. A particularly blended variety is found in official and pseudo-official speech, especially when it comes to political, military or economic matters. In such contexts, wèrrdeⁿ is widely used as a future time marker:

(2) a. Mer wèrrdeⁿ oîs bémüeh, d Forderigen
    we FUT:1p we:ACC give_effort DEF:Fs demand:p
    vo ër dëren Initiative" z erfüleⁿ.
of DEM:DATsF initiative INF fulfill
    'We'll do our best to meet the demands of this initiative.'

    b. Òiseⁿ Présidänt wììrt iⁿ dërenⁿ Sach mit der
      our:Ms president FUT:3s in DEM:FsDAT issue with DEF:DATsF
      zueständigeⁿ Amtsstell Kontakt uufnèe.
      competent office contact up:take
      'Our president will contact the competent office in this issue.'

3. Intention and prediction

Intentional future can be expressed by means of weleⁿ 'to want':

(3) Ich wott en Brief schriibeⁿ.

I want:1s INDEF:Ms letter write
'I am going to write a letter.'

This, of course, does not amount to saying that weleⁿ is a marker of intentional future. A weleⁿ clause can always refer to an unspecified time (which is naturally often placed in the future) or even to an impossible situation. A similar caveat holds for müeseⁿ and sìcher, expressions that may be used to strongly assert prediction:

(4) a. Dän müescht stèèrbeⁿ.

then have_to:2s die
'Then you will die.'

    b. Er vertwachet moorn sìcher spaat.
      He wake_up:3s tomorrow surely late
      'He will wake up late tomorrow.'

Semantically, however, the terms contain no element of prediction. müeseⁿ refers to general obligation ('must, have to') and sìcher means 'surely'.

The picture changes when it comes to phraseological expressions (idioms). Here, weleⁿ 'to want' marks prediction:

(5) a. Mer wànd dän luegen
    we want:1p then look
    'We shall see'
b. *I wott der dän!* (sc. äis haue)n
   I want:1s you:DAT then one:N hit
   Used as a threat implying: 'If you do this, I'll hit / scold you.'

In these cases, a literal reading of *wele* is hard to get but certainly possible. No literal interpretation is available with the following. *wil* is an archaic form of *wele* and occurs virtually only in the phraseeme (6)

    (6) *I wil em s sägen* / *uusrichten*.
        I want:1s he:DAT it tell deliver_a_message
        'I will tell him.'

Here, *wil* unambiguously marks intentional future time reference.

4. Degrees of certainty and scheduling

Neither degrees of certainty nor scheduling are reflected by the verbal tense system. For unintentionality, see section 17.

5. Future time reference and aspect

There is a periphrastic Progressive that is optionally used to represent situations that are perceived as imperfective, non-habitual and active. The construction is based on an infinitive introduced by *am 'at:DEF:Ns' and syntactically incorporates objects. If objects have an article, they cannot be incorporated. Therefore, speakers have to resort to a two-nexus-construction with *draa sii 'ANA:at BE' and an infinitive with the particle *z* (literally 'to'). With future time reference, no particular restrictions on the use of the Progressive can be observed, cf. Progressive (7a) vs. Non-Progressive (7b):

    (7) a. *Moorn bin iwider am schaffen*.  
        tomorrow BE:1s I again at:DEF:Ns work
        'Tomorrow I will be working again.'

    b. *Moorn schaff i wider*.  
        tomorrow worke:1s I again
        'Tomorrow I will work again.'

In (8), Progressive and Non-Progressive can be observed in the incidence scheme:

    (8) a. *Was meinsch, was isch din Brüeder am mache*.  
        what think:2s what BE:3s your:brother at:DEF:Ns make
        wün mer aachömed?
        SUB we arrive:1p
        'What do you think your brother will be engaged in when we arrive?'
b. Was meinsch, was macht din Brüeder wän mer aachömed?

'How will your brother react when we arrive?'

In (8a) the event in the subordinate clause occurs during the main clause event. In contrast, if the Progressive is not used, the events appear contiguously sequenced. (Due to post hoc ergo propter hoc, the most natural interpretation of (8b) entails 'to react' as English translation of macht.)

8—9. Future time reference in linked clauses

In Züritüütsch, there is no consecutio temporum at work, i.e. no shift from past vs. non-past to anterior vs. non-anterior. In two cases, however, clause linkage affects tense value.

The first syntactic constraint concerns purposive and precessive clauses. They are subordinated by means of das and bevor, respectively. The inherent posteriority of such clauses is expressed by the Non-Past, provided the matrix points to a Non-Past event:

(9) a. Ich schriib mim Brüeder en Brief, das er wäiss,

I write:1s my:DATsM brother INDEF:Ms letter COMP he know:3s

das ich zuën em uf Bsuech chumeN.

I PST:know SUB COMP I to he:DAT on visit come:1s

'I am writing a letter to my brother so that he will know that I am coming to see him.'

b. Er gaat is Bett bevor i häi chumeN.

he go:3s in:DEFsN bed SUB I home come:1s

'He goes to bed before I come home.'

With a matrix clause in the Past, however, purposives require a Non-Past (10a) whereas precessives force the use of a Past form (10b):

(10) a. Ich haN mim Brüeder en Brief gschribeN, das er wäiss,

I AUX:1s my:DATsM brother INDEF:Ms letter PST:write COMP he know:3s (*das i gwüsst ha) das ich zuën em uf Bsuech chumeN, [FTRQ: 96]

I PST:know SUB COMP I to he:DAT on visit come:1s

'I wrote a letter to my brother so that he would know that I was coming to see him.'

b. Ich biN is Bett ggage bevor min Brüeder häi

I AUX:1s in:DEFsN bed PST:go SUB my:Ms brother home

choo isch. (*bevor min Brüeder häi chunt.) [FTRQ: 22]

'I went to bed before my brother came home.'
The second phenomenon shows up with the general subordinator *wo* that introduces adserntially subordinated and relative clauses (on this polysemy cf. Bickel (1991: 120ff *et passim*)). When adserntially used, a *wo* clause forces a historical present interpretation upon Non-Past forms:

(11) *Wo* er häi *chunt*, gseet er uf em *Tisch* en *Brief*.

'SWhen he comes home, he sees a letter on the table.'

The constraint can be infringed if the *wo*-clause functions as a topic in a fashion similar to English *given that*-clauses (cf. Haiman 1978: 573) (on *choo* cf. Section 17). I am not aware, however, of sentence-initial *wo*-topics. (The contradiction particle *doch* is virtually obligatory and presumably serves to assure conversational relevance of the 'weather topics' in (12).)

(12) a. *Wieso gönd er *nöd veruse*, *wo* s doch so *schön isch*?

'Why don't you go out, given that the weather is so fair?'

b. *Wieso söl i jetzt *e* *Wösch oohtue*,

'Why should I do a wash, given that it will be raining soon?'

To convey a non-past meaning in an adserntially subordinate clause without implying givenness, the subordinator *wän* may be used, cf. (8) above. This device covers conditions in general. The subordinate clause contains either an Indicative to capture a "real" condition (13) or a Conditional to encode an "unreal" one (14):

(13) *Wän de Bueb (moorn) s Gält überchunt*,

'If the boy gets the money (tomorrow), he will buy a present for the girl.'

(14) *Wän de Bueb (moorn) s Gält überchëèem*,

'If the boy were to get the money (tomorrow), he would buy a present for the girl.'

Note that inclusion of *moorn* 'tomorrow' has no effect on tense morphology. For completeness, the following examples give the same opposition with past reference:
(15) Wo de Bueb s Gält überchoo hät,
SUB DEFsM boy DEFsN money PST:receive AUX:3s
hät er em Mäitli es Gschänk gchauft. [FTRQ: 15]
AUX:3s he DEFsN:DAT girl INDEFsN present PST:buy
'If the boy has received the money, he will have bought a present for the girl.'

(16) Wo de Bueb s Gält überchoo het,
SUB DEFsM boy DEFsN money PST:receive COND:3s
het er em Mäitli es Gschänk gchauft. [FTRQ: 16]
COND:3s he DEFsN:DAT girl INDEFsN present PST:buy
'If the boy had received the money, he would have bought a present for the girl.'

10. Future time reference and marked speech act types

Except for phraseological phenomena (cf. (5b) in section 3), no grammatical particularities were observed when the Non-Past is used in promises or threats.

13 — 14. Prospectivity and remoteness

Prospectivity and remoteness are not categories of Züritüütsch grammar. A sentence like 'it is going to rain' (FTQR: 47) will be rendered in the same way as 'it will rain' (FTQR: 49).

(17) Schunt cho rägne.
it come:3s SP rain
'It is going to rain / it will rain.'

Imminence requires adverbial expressions in order to be made explicit, grad in the affirmative and fascht for negation:

(18) a. Ich schlaaff jetzt dän grad ii.
fall_asleep:1s now then immediately PREV
'I am about to fall asleep.'

b. Geschter bi i fascht women Auto
yesterday AUX:1s I nearly by:INDEFsN:DAT car
überfaare woorde.
run_over PASS:PST
'Yesterday, I was on the verge of being run over by a car.'
17. Inchoativity, change of state, and future in copular constructions

Copular constructions have either adjectival or nominal predicates. I shall first discuss the former.

With adjectival predicates, there are two copulas indicating change of state: *wèèrde* (literally 'to become, get'; 3s Indicative Non-Past *wììrt*) and *überchoo* (literally 'to get, receive'; 3s Indicative Non-Past *chunt über*). Their distribution is complementary: Where a predicate is constructed with a *sii* copula ('to be'; 3s Indicative Non-Past *isch*) to indicate a state, its change is expressed by *wèèrde*; where the copula is *haa* ('to have'; 3s Indicative Non-Past *hät*), the corresponding change of state verb is *überchoo*. (In interlinear glossing, I indicate only the temporal or aspectual value of the copula. Other surface distinctions follow from selectional restrictions or from the syntactic frame in which the copula occurs.)

(19) a.  *Es isch chalt.*
      *it* PRS:3s cold
      'It is cold.'

     b.  *Es wììrt chalt.*
      *it* INCH:3s cold
      'It's getting cold.' (also: 'It will be cold.')</n
(20) a.  *Si hät chalt.*
      *she* PRS:3s cold
      'She is cold'

     b. *Si chunt chalt über.*
      *she* INCH:3s cold PREV
      'She is getting cold.' (also: 'She will be cold.')</n
An expection to this rule occurs with phraseological *haa*-expressions that contain a dummy object pronoun (*e)s. Thus, if in a construction like (21a) the pronoun (*e)s cannot be replaced by anything, there is no change of state alternative available (21b):

(21) a.  *Er hät s guet.*
      *he* PRS:3s it well
      'He is fine.'

     b. *Er chunt s guet über.*
      *he* INCH:1s it well PREV
      (*He is getting fine)

The translations of (19b) and (20b) suggest that both auxiliaries may indicate future time reference. This results from focusing on the result of the change of state rather than on the process being observed at the moment of speech. Inchoative and future reading are easily disambiguated by means of adverbial qualification:
(22)  
*Es wiirt langwiilig.*

  *it* INCH/FUT:3s boring

'It is getting boring / it will be boring.'

  a.  
*Es wiirt langsam langwiilig.*

  *it* INCH:3s slowly boring

'It's (slowly) getting boring.'

(said e.g. while watching a movie)

  b.  
*Hütt zaabig wiirt s langwiilig.*

  today at evening FUT:3s it boring

'It will be boring tonight.'

(said e.g. in view of an announced party)

(23)  
*I glaub, er chunt en gèèrn über.*

*I believe:1s he INCH/FUT:3s he:ACC love(ADJ) PREV

'I think he is getting to love him / he will love him.'

  a.  
*I glaub, er chunt en langsaam gèèrn über.*

  *I believe:1s he INCH:3s he:ACC slowly love(ADJ) PREV

'I think he is (slowly) getting to love him.'

  b.  
*I glaub, er chunt en scho no emaal gèèrn über.*

  *I believe:1s he FUT:3s he:ACC PTCL PTCL some_time love(ADJ) PREV

'I think he will certainly love him some time.'

Thus, whereas *wèèrde* has no future sense with verbs, it does have such a reading with adjectival predicates.

Adjectives of judgement (*guet 'well', schön 'nice', rächt 'right', blööd 'silly, wrong', lätz 'wrong', schief 'wrong, distorted') allow an alternative construction with *usechoo* (literally 'to come out of something'; 3s Indicative Non-Past *chunt use*). This construction excludes an inchoative reading and is restricted to future time reference.

(24)  
*Es chunt guet use*.

  *it* FUT:3s well PREV

'It will turn out well.'

Especially younger speakers tend to shorten the expression by omitting *use*.

What we have observed in the last example holds generally for nominal predicates: They are not compatible with an inchoative sense. That is, a nominal referent cannot be captured in *statu nascendi*. There are, however, specific copulas to index future reference. Three types of nominal predication are distinguished: Existence, identity, and possession (in a general relational sense).

Existential clauses have a dummy (*e*) subject and *haa* as copula (25a). As shown in (25b), future reference is expressed by *gèè* (literally 'to give'; 3s Indicative Non-Past *git*).
The same future copula is used with nominal predicates in identity constructions. Present reference is expressed by the *sii*-copula. (26a) shows present, (26b) future tense.

Nominal predicates without determination take *wëerde* instead of *gèè* as future copula (27b). In this regard, they belong with adjectival constructions. The impossibility of inchoative reading, however, suggests a particular syntactic status. Moreover, the use of *wëerde* is synchronically at variance in so far as sentences like (27c) and (27d) are possible though archaic for some speakers.

Possessive or 'relational' constructions take the *haa*-copula for present reference (28a) and *überchoo* 'to receive; to get' to point to a future state (28b).
b. *Ich chume* es *Velo über.*

'I have got a bike.'

In all cases from (24) to (28), the unavailability of inchoative meaning precludes inclusion of an adverb like *langsaml* 'slowly' which elsewhere (cf. (22b) and (23b)) focusses on the process of a change of state. An apparent counter-example is (29).

(29) *Das git langsam öppis.*

DEM FUT:3s slowly something

'It looks like something will come of it.'

Yet a closer inspection shows that in (29), *langsaml* 'slowly' does not suggest a view of something coming into existence. Rather, the adverb indicates that the speaker has more and more evidence that something will exist in future time.

In one case, however, inchoativity is a possible reading. This occurs with 'possessive' constructions denoting an emotional state or a corresponding state to be:

(30) a. *Si hät e rise Wuet.*

she PRS:3s INDEFsF giant rage

'She is in a rage.'

b. *Si chunt e rise Wuet über.*

she FUT:3s INDEFsF giant rage PREV

'She will be in a rage.'

c. *Si chunt langsaml e Wuet über.*

she INCH:3s slowly INDEFsF rage PREV

'She is slowly becoming enraged.'

The inchoative and/or future copulas we have met so far are all etymologically derived from change expressions, viz. change of orientation, change of place or change of possession (in a narrow sense). Change of orientation is found with *wèèrde* whose Proto-Germanic root *werb-a-* goes back to Proto-Indo-European *wert-* meaning 'to turn over' (cf. Sanskrit *vartate* 'it turns, rolls' and Old Church Slavonic *vrítěti* sę 'it turns, rolls' (Kluge, s.v. *werden*)). Change of place is presumably at the basis of *überchoo*, which seems to derive from *über* 'over' and *choo* 'come'. A similar semantic core provides the etymon for the future sign *usechoo*. This etymon, a full verb meaning 'to come out of something', is still found in modern Züritüütsch. Finally, the future copula *gèè* has a change of possession etymon which is still present as a full verb denoting active 'to give'.

Yet another 'change' expression gives rise to a sign for inchoativity and future reference, viz. the change of position simplex *choo* ('to come'). It is productively used as an inchoative sign with infinitive plus *z*. By the same construction, *choo* covers also future time reference. This is similar to the ambiguity of *wèèrde* and *überchoo* with adjectival predicates (cf. (22) and (23) above.) Incidentally, notice that the semantically
closest equivalent in idiomatic English requires adjectival constructions (E. Danziger, p.c.):

(31)  **Si chunt z schwitze**.
      she INCH/FUT:3s INF sweat
      'She is getting sweaty / will be sweaty.'

  a.  **Si chunt langsam z schwitze**.
      she INCH:3s slowly INF sweat
      'She is slowly getting sweaty.'

  b.  **Si chunt scho no z schwitze**.
      she FUT:3s PTCL PTCL INF sweat
      'She will certainly be sweaty.'

The construction may only be applied to verbs denoting a limited range of body states: *schwitzen* ('to sweat'), *früüren* ('to feel cold'), *schnuufen* ('to breathe', in the *choo* construction in the sense of 'to breathe heavily'). With *schlotteren* ('to tremble') and *stinken* ('to stink'), the construction is attested but not unanimously accepted by informants:

(32)  a.  **Me chunt z schlottere**.  [Weber 1987: 244]
      one INCH/FUT:3s INF tremble
      'One starts trembling (is getting "trembly").'

  b.  **Er chunt z stinke**.  [Id. III, 269 with note "said of a corpse"]
      he INCH/FUT:3s INF stink
      'It is getting stinky / it will be stinky.'

In contrast, *rede* 'to talk' does easily combine with the *choo*-construction.

(33)  ...und dänn sind mer no uf s Abstimigsresultaat z rede choo.
      and then AUX:1p we PTCL on DEFsN ballot:result INF talk INCH:3s
      '...and then we got talking about the results of the ballots.'

In (33) there is a clear sense of unintentionality which can hardly be attributed to the lexical meaning of *rede*. (In contrast to e.g. *schwitzen* 'to sweat', *rede* does easily combine with *wele* 'to want'.) Rather, the semantic effect is due to a 'contamination' from the notional core of the verb class that the *choo+z INF* frame primordially defines, viz. 'uncontrolled body state' (cf. above). This is also the reason why an intrinsically more intentional *verbum dicendi* like *säge* 'say' does not enter the construction.

Apart from this, *choo* does not seem to have fully grammaticalized into an inchoative or future marker. There are, however, some metonymic shifts yielding future sense. With weather expressions, for instance, *choo* is often shifted from local movement to the result of its implied temporal change of state:
A sentence like (34) may be used when the speaker does in fact see the rainy clouds approaching him. This local sense is then easily faded out, yielding 'it will rain'. This purely temporal meaning is the regular reading when (34) refers to another place than where the speaker is. A similar case can be observed with certain locative constructions:

(35) a. Si chunt i d Pubertèèt.
    she come:3s in DEFsF puberty
    'She is reaching puberty.'

b. Si chunt i di foift. [VZ 1, 4:30]
    she come:3s in DEFsF fifth
    'She is going into the fifth [form].'

Here, the shift to a change of state or future meaning hinges upon the semantic value of the locative noun. It has to denote a life span like Pubertèèt 'puberty' or, by metonymy, di foift [sc. klass] 'the fifth [sc. form]' rather than a place.

19. Conclusions

In investigating future time reference in Züritüütsch, it appears to be fruitful to consider not only verbal tense systems but also to focus on copular constructions. It is in this area that Züritüütsch shows grammatical future marking devices. Except for usechoo and gèè, which are restricted to future time reference, the devices combine future with inchoative meaning. Regarding the syntactic frames in which these devices are used, nominal predicates, in contrast to adjectival ones, allow future but not inchoative copulas, except for emotional state expressions. However, further research is needed in this area. In the verbal system, the only grammaticalized future and inchoativity marker (choo) requires a substantivized infinitive. It has, therefore, some affinities with copular constructions. Interestingly, the choo+infinitive construction shows the feature of unintentionality often associated with 'to come' based future tenses in other European languages. All productive future and inchoative markers etymologically derive from change (of orientation, position or possession) expressions.

Notes

1 I would like to thank Edgar Suter (Zürich), Eve Danziger and John Haviland (both Nijmegen) for useful comments on earlier drafts. Data come from the future time reference questionnaire (noted as 'FTQR' after examples) and from video tapes (different reference labels). Examples without reference are invented but have been checked with a number informants.

2 In interlinear glossing only Past ('PST') will be indicated. Non-Past gets no glossing. The same policy will be followed throughout, i.e. only morphologically marked categories are labelled.
After certain modal and movement verbs (müese\textsuperscript{3} 'to have to', laa 'to let', tö-rö-refe\textsuperscript{3} 'to be permitted', schicke\textsuperscript{3} 'to send', choo 'to come', gaa 'to go'), the infinitive particles go (~ goge\textsuperscript{4}) and cho (~ choge\textsuperscript{4}) are compulsory. Except after gaa, where only go is possible, the choice between the two forms is governed by empathy: cho relates the event to the speaker (abbreviated 'SP' in the example), implying personal affectedness or involvement, go turns it away from the speaker, implying generality. I am not aware of any temporal or aspectual meaning of these particles.

Unless there is evidence that no language allows such a meaning, I assume this constraint to be linguistic if perhaps with a Whorfian effect. It seems to me possible to conceptualize the mere process of e.g. a painting coming into existence without focusing on the act of painting itself (which the language would usually suggest). This is presumably due to interference from High German where a construction like Das Haus ist im Werden or ... ist im Enstehen (begriffen) ('The house is coming into being' or '... is in the making) is possible. (Notice that Zürüttütsch, like English, has no equivalent to High German entstehen. entsta, which is occasionally heard, is a recent loan.)

**Abbreviations**

| ACC | Accusative | INF | Infinitive |
| ADJ | Adjective | M | Masculine |
| ANA | Anaphor | N | Neuter |
| AUX | Auxiliary | NEG | Negator |
| COMP | Complementizer | p | Plural |
| COND | Conditional | PASS | Passive |
| DAT | Dative | PREV | Preverb |
| DEF | Definite (article) | PRS | Present |
| DEM | Demonstrative | PST | Past |
| EVID | Evidential | PTCL | Particle |
| F | Feminine | s | Singular |
| FUT | Future | SP | Speaker oriented |
| Id. | Schweizerisches Idiotikon | SUB | Subordinator |
| INCH | Inchoative | 1,2,3 | Grammatical persons |
| INDEF | Indefinite (article) | |

**References**


