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## FUTURE TENSE IN EAST POLISSIAN (BORDER) DIALECTS

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**Słowa kluczowe:** czas przyszły, czas przyszły niedokonany, wschodnia Słowiańszczyzna, język ukraiński, dialekty wschodniopoleskie

### Introduction

The issue of futurity, its epistemological status, and the way to express it in different languages have been studied extensively over the past few decades. Equally well-known are the grammatical devices used in standard European languages to encode future (non-past) tenses. The realization of future tenses across European languages, or, in a less traditional terminology, future time reference (FTR)<sup>1</sup>, with specific attention to Slavic languages, has also been the subject of a series of typological studies particularly active since the 2000s, but with antecedents in earlier decades (Ultan 1978; Bybee 1985; Bybee, Dahl 1989; Whaley 1999, 2000; Dahl 2000; Andersen 2006 etc.). European languages have, in fact, different ways to encode futurity. If, on the one hand, Romance languages display a well-developed system of future tense markers, on the other hand, there are languages, albeit a small number, that tend to avoid overt marking, as for example the Scandinavian languages, or have no tense constructions at all, as Finnish. In turn, Slavic languages display various morphosemantic strategies or future grams to express futurity (Dahl 2000: 311–312). Futurity and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. EUROTYP (Dahl 2000: 309).

future tense marking in East Slavic dialectology have been predominantly examined within a historical linguistic framework. The areal distribution of futurity markers in East Slavic dialects has, with few exceptions, been described in an unsystematic manner. This observation also applies to northern Ukrainian dialects (Central and East Polissian), particularly those spoken in the areas situated along the Belarusian and Russian borders. Accordingly, this article – part of a broader investigation of the relevant morphosyntactic and areal-typological features of East Polissian dialects<sup>2</sup> – focuses on the grammatical means of expressing futurity in northeastern Ukrainian dialects, with particular attention on the use and areal distribution of the analytic (periphrastic) imperfective future and its synthetic (inflectional) counterpart. Their comparison with East Slavic standard and non-standard varieties is essential for achieving a clearer understanding of the typology of Slavic languages and, more broadly, of European languages.

Section one outlines the background and theoretical framework of studies on futurity and future tense in East Slavic languages. Section two addresses the issue of the Ukrainian imperfective synthetic future, comparing it with the often debated Romance model. Section three examines the use and distribution of the analytic and synthetic future in East Polissian dialects.

The generalization of dialectal data is based on a personal dialectal corpus and other primary sources such as linguistic atlases and dialectal text collections from this and neighbouring areas.

## 1. Future Tense in East Slavic

Most Slavic languages, particularly the East and West branches, and partially South Slavic (e.g. Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish, Kashubian, Czech, Slovak, Slovene, and some dialects of Croatian), express imperfective future by means of an analytic construction formed by the future form of the verb *\*byti* ‘to be(come)’ followed by an imperfective infinitival or participial complement. This construction is not found in Old Church Slavonic and in most of the modern South Slavic standard languages: Croatian, Serbian, Bulgarian and Macedonian. It is assumed that the imperfective future with ‘to be’ was absent in Proto-Slavic. Its development and attestation in the individual Slavic languages and language groups are therefore ascribed to later periods (cf. Whaley 1999: 159–160).

Even though the *be*-future with imperfective verbs is standard in modern East Slavic literary languages, these constructions seem to have appeared in East Slavic later than in West Slavic. Czech is in fact the Slavic language with the earliest

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2 This contribution is an expanded version of a paper presented at the 17<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Slavists (Paris, 2025). Its main arguments were previously outlined in Del Gaudio (2025a).

textual attestation (around the year 1300) of this type of future (Křížková 1960: 93–94) whereas in Russian, for example, the *be*-future became the dominant construction only in the eighteenth century (Kuznecov 1959: 246; Whaley 1999: 160). Old Russian (Old East Slavic) texts show different strategies for expressing futurity: auxiliaries based on the verbs *imamb* ‘have/take’<sup>3</sup>; *xoču* ‘want’ are attested with infinitives of either aspect. Other auxiliaries, such as *čbnu* ‘begin’ and *stanu* ‘become’, only occur with the imperfective. Some of these constructions are found up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Whaley 2000: 62).

Regarding the individual East Slavic standard languages, a *be*-future is attested in the Belarusian area from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onward, with sporadic occurrences in earlier texts. In Ukrainian, this construction is likewise documented in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and underwent a rapid expansion already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Bevzenko 1960: 324). In Russian, traces of the *be*-future appear primarily in late 15<sup>th</sup>-century diplomatic correspondence with Poland (Křížková 1960: 175), although isolated evidence can also be found in earlier texts that are not necessarily influenced by Western models.

Apart from the widespread *be*-future imperfective constructions, East Slavic dialects and their respective standard languages present a series of additional morpho-syntactic devices to express futurity (cf. Dahl 2000: 319–324; Whaley 2000: 4–10; Roncero Toledo 2019: 333–337). The prevalence and selection of one strategy over another depend on a series of interrelated factors: diatopic, diastratic, semantic-pragmatic and stylistic (register). Besides the already discussed copular or analytic construction (formed by the auxiliary *buty* / *byt* ‘to be’ in the future tense followed by a verb in the (imperfective) infinitive), the other common morphosyntactic counterpart include the usual perfective future (or present) which consists of a perfective verbal base with person/number inflection (conjugation) as in the present tense.

Area specific constructions include: 1) the synthetic (imperfective) future, typical of Standard Ukrainian and some Belarusian varieties, encoded by the infinitive of the main verb and a cliticised form of the verb ‘to have / to take’ with person and number marking, and 2) the rarer copular or analytic construction with the auxiliary *buty* / *byt* ‘to be’ in the future tense followed by the participle in *-l* instead of the infinitive<sup>4</sup>.

Less obvious or covert strategies, whose semantic-pragmatic future implications may, at times, be debatable, involve: 3) the de-obligative future based on the verb *maty* ‘have to’ with some variants followed by an infinitive<sup>5</sup>; 4) the de-volitive future – widespread in the Balkan area – consisting in a verb originally meaning ‘to want’ + different tenses / moods according to the language. In the case of East

3 On this issue, see section 2.

4 This type of future (cf. ‘futurum exactum’) is occasionally found in Old Church Slavonic (Whaley 2000: 24).

5 Referring to Ukrainian, we return on this point in section 2.

Slavic languages, the verb *xočē(t)* 3SG.PRES ‘he/she wants’ is followed by an infinitive; 5) the become-type future, also known as de-venitive future, expressed by an auxiliary verb meaning ‘to become’ (cf. German “werden”) plus a verb in infinitive<sup>6</sup>.

As discussed in Whaley (2000: 10), the *be*-future in East Slavic languages has not undergone morphologization and it is tendentially grammaticalized. In Ukrainian, this future is considered by most scholars a grammaticalized construction because the finite component of the construction conveys no meaning other than future-tense marking (Rusaniv’s’kij 1971: 249).

## 2. The question of the Ukrainian synthetic future

The issue of the future tense in East Slavic languages, with a particular focus on the Ukrainian synthetic (or inflectional) future, has been examined by Kostjantyn Tyščenko (Tišenko 2009: 42–43) and Andrii Danylenko (2011). More recently, this topic has also been discussed in Kristian Roncero’s doctoral dissertation (2019: 400–407), supervised by Greville G. Corbett. Roncero primarily concentrated on Belarusian Palesian (West Polesian) dialects rather than on Ukrainian proper. However, when discussing the Belarusian dialectal area known as West Polesia, Ukrainian must also be taken into consideration because of the evident linguistic similarities with both Standard Ukrainian and its northwestern (Polissian) dialects. From a dialectological perspective, this area may in fact be regarded as a continuum – if not an extension – of northwestern Ukrainian into Belarusian territory.

As mentioned in section one, the Ukrainian synthetic (imperfective) future is formed by combining the infinitive of an imperfective verb with a cliticized form of the verb ‘to have / to take’ marked for person and number, for example, *hovorytymu* 1SG.FUT ‘I shall speak’ is derived from *hovoryty* INF ‘to speak’ + *-mu* 1SG ‘have/take’. Scholars generally agree that this construction exhibits a clear analogy with the historical development of the synthetic future in Western Romance languages (Italian, French, Portuguese, Spanish etc.), as illustrated in Table 1.

ROMANCE MODEL	UKRAINIAN SYNTHETIC FUTURE
It. <i>canterò</i> 1SG.FUT ‘I shall/will sing’	Ukr. <i>spivatymu</i> ‘I shall/will sing’ <i>spivaty</i> INF. ‘to sing’ + <i>-imu</i> 1SG.PRES
<b>Historical development:</b> Lat. / It. <i>cantare</i> INF. ‘to sing’ + Lat. <i>habēo</i> 1SG. PRES ‘I have to’ → <i>cantar(e)</i> + (h)a(bē)o > <i>cantarao</i> > <i>cantarò</i> > <i>canterò</i>	<b>Historical development:</b> <i>imu</i> + <i>-ty</i> -INF ( <i>imu</i> + <i>spivaty</i> ) → <i>-ty</i> -INF + <i>imu</i> : <i>spivatymu</i>

Table 1: Analogy between the Romance model and the Ukrainian Synthetic Future

6 For further details, see Dahl (2000: 322–323).

This similarity was already noted and debated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Ivan V. Šarovol's'kyj (Šarovol's'kij 1927), who identified a Romanian influence on the development of the Ukrainian pattern, and by Vasyľ Dem''jančuk (Dem'ňančuk 1928), who critically rejected this thesis because this construction is unknown in standard Romanian<sup>7</sup>.

The hypothesis of a 'Romance model' was reconsidered in recent decades by Kostjantyn Tyščenko, who also acknowledged that this construction is absent from neighboring Romance languages (Romanian and Moldovan). The ethnolinguist was inclined to posit earlier contacts between speakers of Vulgar Latin and Proto-Ukrainian dialects (Tišenko 2009: 42–43). This assumption is open to debate, since it would imply linguistic contact between late spoken Latin (which is plausible) and Proto-East Slavic dialects, probably via the Black Sea area, at a time when Proto-Slavic dialects were still relatively undifferentiated. However, according to the available textual evidence, the synthetic future became established in Ukrainian only in the second millennium. According to a widely accepted historical reconstruction based on extant documentary evidence, the synthetic imperfective future tense first passed through a stage of analytical (periphrastic) constructions. Early examples of the analytical constructions that later gave rise to synthetic future forms are attested in Old Rusian and, subsequently, in Ukrainian documents from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Originally, there was parallel usage of the auxiliaries *imaty* (< имати >) and *iměty* (< имѣти >), both meaning 'to have'. These two verbal forms competed intensively during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Eventually, the form (*i*)*maty* prevailed over *iměty* in the Ukrainian linguistic area, whereas in Russian territories the dominant variant became *iměty*. At an earlier stage of their development, both verbs could combine with either perfective or imperfective verbs. The form (*i*)*maty*, gradually converging with *iměty*, lost its semantic and grammatical connection with its aspectual counterpart *jaty* 'begin', thus becoming mono-aspectual. Consequently, the conditions for the reanalysis of a modal construction (*imu* + infinitive) as a future-tense construction were established during this period. The shift from an analytical to a synthetic future probably took place from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century onward. The construction *imu* + infinitive began to be used alongside *budu* + infinitive. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this analytical future grammaticalized into a synthetic one (Bevzenko, Grišenko, Lukinova, Niščuk, Rusaniv's'kij, Samijlenko 1978: 294–296). Its diffusion, however, was not uniform across all dialectal areas.

Andrii Danylenko, in his substantial contribution on the origin of the Ukrainian synthetic future compared with its Romance analogue, argues convincingly against

7 Standard Romanian uses a de-volitive future with the inflective forms of the modal *vrea* 'want' + infinitive. In this respect Romanian differs from western Romance languages and resembles Balkan languages in the formation of a periphrastic future with a volitional verb. Cf. Dindelegan, Maiden (2013: 38–39).

a possible influence of the latter over the former. He maintains that the Ukrainian synthetic future is based on a different auxiliary than that found in the Romance model and denies any genetic or typological relationship between the two. The Ukrainian synthetic future, derived from the aforementioned *jati* ‘to take’ – originally carrying an inceptive (‘begin’) meaning – should not be equated with the better-known Western Romance future tense<sup>8</sup>. In Danylenko’s view, the misconception arises from the historical overlap, in parts of East Slavic, of three Late Common Slavic verbs sharing the same root *em-*: \**jęti* : \**jimę* ‘to take’; \**jimati* : *jemlję* ‘to take’; and the imperfective \**jimęti* : \**jimamę* ‘to hold, own, have’. This overlap led to morphonological confusion between *imęti* ‘to have’ and *jati* ‘to take’, as reflected in Middle Ukrainian homonymic *imut*’, which could derive from both *imęti* (< *jimęti*) and *jati* (< *jęti*)<sup>9</sup>. Consequently, whereas the Romance future is based on the auxiliary *habere* used in combination with the infinitive and *praedicativum*, ultimately undergoing full grammaticalization, the Ukrainian – and, to a lesser extent, Belarusian – synthetic future derives from an East Slavic periphrastic construction. In this construction, the determinate imperfective verb ‘to take’ functions as a de-inceptive auxiliary, exhibiting varying degrees of grammaticalization. Nonetheless, an analogy between these two types of future tense can be drawn, since both are derived from a de-modal extension of the verb ‘to have’. A similar de-modal auxiliary is abundantly attested in Old Church Slavonic, where it is commonly classified as a Balkanism, and is further attested in the Russian recension of Church Slavonic as a result of the second South Slavic influence (Danylenko 2011: 177)<sup>10</sup>.

Criticism of Danylenko’s historical-typological reconstruction of the Ukrainian synthetic future can be summarized in two key arguments: (1) the absence of the verb *jati* (< Late Common Slavic *jęti* ‘to take’) in other Slavic language groups, particularly West and South Slavic; and (2) the extremely limited textual and historical evidence for this original inceptive verb, which occurs only twice, as *imutb* (3PL. PRES), in 15th-century Middle Ukrainian texts (Roncero Toledo 2019: 403–404). Moreover, by Danylenko’s own admission (2011: 169), this form could belong either to the paradigm of *imęti* ‘to have’ or to that of *jati* (*imati*) ‘to take, seize’.

8 Additional typological parallelisms can be extended to other languages. Hungarian, for example, whose language relies on a former Slavic substratum, also turns to the auxiliary ‘fog’ ‘to grasp, seize, take’ (cf. Andersen 2006: 33–34; Danylenko 2011: 153–154). Another isomorphism can be noticed between the modern Bulgarian periphrastic future and the de-volitive periphrastic construction with the lexical verb *xotity* ‘to want, will’ in the Transcarpathian and eastern Ukrainian dialects. These traits led Vasyl’ Nimčuk (Nimčuk 1993: 54) to postulate an area of linguistic convergence between Balkan and Ukrainian dialects.

9 For further details and for a morphonological explication, see Danylenko (2011: 154–155; 160–161).

10 The modal use of *imamę* in Old Church Slavonic as one of the strategies for expressing futurity, like the Latin *habeo* in the Romance languages, along with the parallel with the Ukrainian synthetic future derived by the fusion of the imperfective infinitive and the auxiliary verb *jaty* (*jęti* / *јаму*), was shortly outlined by Trunte (2005: 128).



Figure 1: Distribution of SYNTHETIC FUTURE in Europe<sup>11</sup>

Although Danylenko's well-grounded argumentation appears plausible, it is at times analytically complex. For this reason, and for purely descriptive purposes – particularly when attempting to highlight the areal and dialectal distribution of the Ukrainian (East Slavic) synthetic future – it is methodologically safer to adopt a more cautious stance about its origin, acknowledging the co-occurrence of a dual developmental pathway 'to have / to take' (cf. Section 1).

Hennig Andersen also addressed the issue of the synthetic future in East Slavic in his study of periphrastic futures in the Slavic languages. His account of the East Slavic future largely confirms the findings discussed above: the synthetic future historically developed from an original periphrastic construction (*imu* + INF), which subsequently underwent grammaticalization. This future tense is widespread in Ukrainian and in some contiguous southern Belarusian dialects, with only sporadic

<sup>11</sup> Source: Roncero Toledo (2019: 407) based on Dahl (2000); Mackevič (Mackevič 1959).

traces in peripheral northern Russian dialects. What remains debatable, as shown in Section 3, is Andersen's claim concerning the alleged universal presence of this future in modern Ukrainian dialects (Andersen 2006: 29–30).

### 3. Imperfective future tense and dialectal variation

Futurity and the general grammatical strategies used to express future tenses in Ukrainian dialects have been extensively treated in the scholarly literature (Bevzenko 1997: 213–217). Nevertheless, a closer examination reveals some gaps that require further clarification, particularly in relation to the areal distribution and typological classification of specific future constructions.

As in the standard East Slavic languages, futurity in Ukrainian dialects can be expressed semantically and pragmatically through a range of morphosyntactic strategies. However, the most frequent formal pattern in these dialects is fundamentally based on the well-known opposition between (i) the perfective future and (ii) the imperfective future.

The perfective future does not pose particular problems at the dialectal level. As in the standard East Slavic languages, it is formed from a perfective verbal stem inflected for person and number (cf. present tense), for example: *skazu* say/tell-1SG.PFV vs *kažu* say/tell-1SG.IPFV 'I shall/will say' etc. By contrast, the imperfective future exhibits more specific and cross-dialectally variable characteristics.

Following Bevzenko's (1997: 213) classification, the imperfective future can be subdivided into two main types: 1) analytic (periphrastic) future constructions and 2) the synthetic (complex) future.

#### The ANALYTIC FUTURE can be further divided into three subtypes:

a) Copular or analytic (periphrastic) future. This is the most common and territorially prevalent future construction. As in Standard Ukrainian and other East Slavic languages, it is formed by conjugated future-tense forms of the auxiliary *buty* 'to be' (for the sake of simplicity, the *budu*-type) followed by the infinitive of the lexical verb, for example: *budu* be-1SG.FUT.IMPF *hovoryty* speak-INF.IMPF 'I shall/will speak'.

b) Analytic (periphrastic) future formed with the auxiliary clitic *mu* (< *imu*) 'have/take' (1SG.PRES; *meš* 2SG, *me* 3SG, etc.) and the infinitive in clause-second or verb-adjacent position, for example: *mu* 1SG.PRES *hovoryty* INF.IMPF 'I shall/will speak'. These future constructions occur primarily in specific dialectal areas, such as Pokuttja, Bukovyna, Transcarpathian (East Carpathian), and Hucul (Hutsul) dialects. They are also sporadically attested in other contiguous dialects (cf. AUM 1988, II: map 244; Bevzenko 1997: 213).

c) Analytic (periphrastic) future formed with the auxiliary *budu* combined with a past tense form, for example: *budu be-1SG.FUT brav [braʊ]* take-1SG.PAST ‘I shall/will take’. These constructions represent, to some extent, a continuation of one of the historical East Slavic futures (Bevzenko, Grišenko, Lukinova, Nimčuk, Rusanivs’kij, Samijlenko 1978: 293–294). This future type is attested primarily in the Upper Dniester area (part of the Galician subgroup), as well as in some neighboring dialects, including Western Carpathian (Lemko) dialects and the western part of the Podillian dialectal area (AUM 1988, II: map 244)<sup>12</sup>.

The SYNTHETIC FUTURE, as outlined in Section 2, is formed by an imperfective verb conjugated with the future tense suffix *-m-* and personal endings (e.g., *-mu*, *-meš*, *-me* etc.). The imperfective synthetic future has a wide areal distribution (Žilko 1966: 101). It encompasses all southeastern Ukrainian dialects, part of the Polissian (northwestern) Ukrainian dialect continuum, and extends into southwestern Belarusian territory. Bevzenko (1997: 213–214) excludes the occurrence of this future only from part of the Right-Bank Polissian area, more specifically the northern Volhynian dialects (AUM 1988, II: map 244). However, as discussed in Section 3.1, this claim is not entirely correct, since the synthetic future also exhibits an irregular and limited distribution in central and eastern Polissian dialects.

Additionally, the synthetic future, even in those areas where it is more densely attested, shows variation in usage, much as in literary (standard) Ukrainian, and may occur in parallel with analytic forms, most frequently of the *budu braty* type (ibid.). The situation in southwestern Ukrainian dialects is more complex, as a higher degree of variation is observed: the imperfective future can be expressed by two analytic (periphrastic) constructions and two synthetic ones. The analytic constructions include the canonical *buty* + infinitive pattern, alongside *buty* combined with a past-tense form of the lexical verb (e.g. *budu braŭ* ‘I shall/will take’), whereas the synthetic constructions may involve either a deverbial enclitic or a proclitic form, for example *bratymu* versus *mu braty* ‘I shall/will take’. This areal distribution is clearly illustrated in AUM (1988, II: map 244)<sup>13</sup>.

Moreover, the synthetic future marked by the suffix *-m-* ‘have/take’ is common in several adjacent southwestern Belarusian dialects, particularly in West Palesian / Polesian varieties (DABM 1963: map 166). It is rarely reported in Standard Belarusian following the 1933 reform, which classified the synthetic form as ‘dialectal’ (cf. Ānkoŭski 1983: 200). There is broad scholarly consensus that the development of this future in the contiguous Belarusian areas has a common Ukrainian origin (cf. Mackevič, Muraško, Oreškova 1964; Roncero Toledo 2019: 400, based on Mackevič 1959: 201; Danylenko 2011).

12 For a classification in English of these dialects, also see Del Gaudio (2017: 76–78).

13 Also, cf. Del Gaudio (2025a: 48).

A final issue is whether the synthetic and analytic futures should be considered semantically identical, or whether a distinction exists between them.

Contemporary average speakers, like most linguists, tend to treat these two future forms as equivalent. However, as noted by Bevzenko (1997: 216–217), already Potebnja (Potebnâ 1874: 310–311) and other linguists in the early twentieth century perceived a subtle semantic difference between the two future types, both in the standard language and at the dialectal level. They concluded that the Ukrainian analytic and synthetic futures reflect, to some extent, the original semantic distinction between the auxiliaries *budu* and *imu* that are incorporated into these constructions. In their view, the analytic future refers to a future action in general, without indicating its onset. It typically describes a prolonged or durative action and is used when the focus lies on the subject, when a passive or resultant state following a future action is implied, and when stylistic considerations require it. On the contrary, the synthetic future is used when attention is directed on the action itself, especially on its forthcoming inception (beginning) rather than on its extended duration (Smerečins'kij 1932: 131).

### 3.1. Imperfective future tense in northeastern Ukrainian dialects

Most northeastern Ukrainian dialects, particularly those spoken along the dialectal belt extending towards Belarusian and Russian territories, form the imperfective future exclusively through analytic constructions: *buty* be-INF.AUX ‘to be’ + infinitive, for example: *bud' eš znat'* [‘budʲeʃ z'natʲ] ‘you will know’.

The corresponding – and (almost) semantically equivalent – synthetic form based on the imperfective infinitive of the main verb + affixal endings: *-mu*, *-meš*, *-me*, *-memo*, *-mete*, *-mut'*, for example: *znatymu* know-1SG.FUT.IPFV ‘I shall know’, is absent or, at least, peripheral in large areas of northern Ukrainian, including most Central and Eastern Polissian dialects<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, the construction modeled on *ja budu brat'* ‘I shall take’ clearly prevails over *bratymu*, as illustrated in Figure 2 (ASH 2019: map 306) and reported in AUM (1984, I: map 263).

14 It should also be noted that in casual, colloquial speech, ease of pronunciation may influence the choice between the synthetic and analytic future. The synthetic form is phonetically more complex, especially with long (polysyllabic) standard verbs such as *perepysuvaty* INF.IMPF ‘to write’, *orhanizovuvaty* INF.IMPF ‘to organize’, and similar items. However, this factor can only partially affect dialectal speech since traditional dialect speakers, especially in the researched area, typically use relatively simple morphosyntactic structures and a more restricted lexical inventory. Also, the affixation may differ from standard Ukrainian (different suffixes, e.g. *-ova-* instead of *-uva-*).

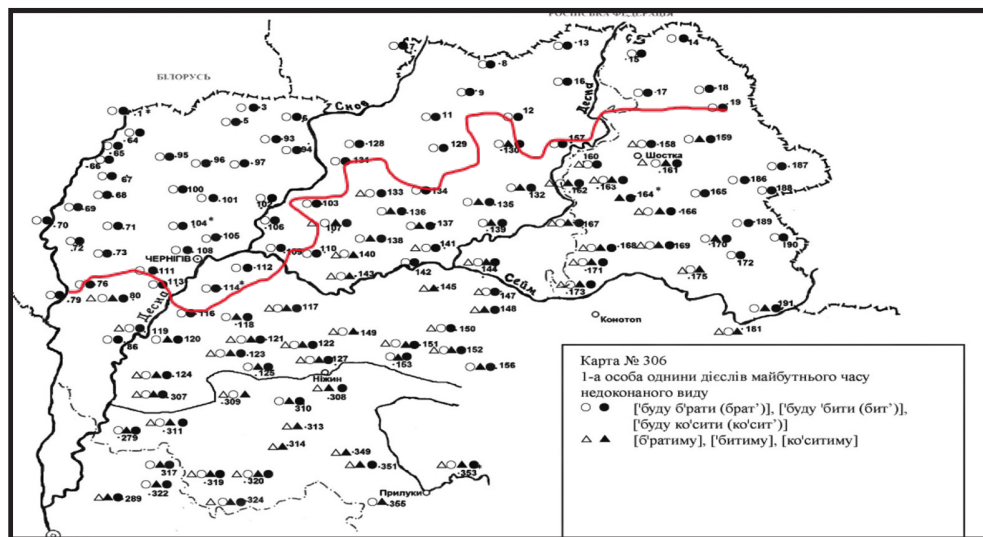


Fig. 2: Imperfective Future in East Polissian dialects

As evident from the map above, there is little to no evidence of the synthetic future north of the Desna and Sejm rivers. Traces of this future have been inconsistently reported south of the approximate line indicated by the author. Even in settlements where the synthetic future was spotted, it generally occurs alongside analytic constructions and remains relatively rare, as noted by dialectologists working in these areas<sup>15</sup>. The presence of the synthetic future in the southern part of the represented territory may be interpreted as a result of contact with southeastern Ukrainian dialects, which form the basis of modern standard Ukrainian. Its sphere of influence may have expanded over the last century through a process of convergence toward the standard.

Adjacent Belarusian and Russian dialects also show no evidence of the synthetic future (DABM 1963: map 166). Accordingly, the Ukrainian Polissia (northern Ukrainian dialects) can be roughly divided into two large areas: 1) a western part, where the synthetic future is prevalent, and 2) central and eastern Polissia, where this feature becomes sporadic and eventually disappears across a broad area north of the Desna and Sejm rivers. This area includes the central-northern parts of the Černihiv and Sumy regions in Ukraine, the Homel’ region in Belarus, and the Brjansk region in the Russian Federation.

Finally, it is worth noting that the presence versus absence of the synthetic future in border dialects constitutes one of the morphological criteria proposed by Bevzenko (1980: 208) for assigning a particular dialectal area to either Ukrainian or

15 Marjejev [Marěëv] personal communication.

Belarusian. As discussed elsewhere, if this criterion (among others) were to be accepted, some parts of the Černihiv, Žytomyr, and Sumy regions would need to be classified within the Belarusian and Russian dialectal territory (Del Gaudio 2025b: 326).

## Conclusions

The discussion has demonstrated that the semantic and syntactic means of expressing futurity – particularly imperfective future constructions and their typological and areal characterization across standard European languages – have been extensively investigated over the past decades. By contrast, in Ukrainian and, more broadly, East Slavic dialectology, future tense marking and its areal distribution have not always been addressed systematically.

The present study confirms that most northeastern Ukrainian dialects, as well as part of the central Polissian area – especially the local varieties spoken along the border zone with Belarus and the Russian Federation – predominantly, if not exclusively, use the imperfective analytic (or periphrastic) future formed with *budu* + INF. The imperfective synthetic future (INF + *-mu*) is only sporadically attested and is largely confined to areas south of the Desna and Sejms rivers (i.e., southern Černihiv and Sumy regions). This distributional pattern, together with a set of additional morphosyntactic features, distinguishes this dialectal area typologically from other southwestern and southeastern Ukrainian dialect groups, as well as from Standard Ukrainian, while aligning it more closely with southeastern Belarusian and southwestern Russian varieties. At the same time, it should be noted that Ukrainian features are also present in the neighboring Belarusian and Russian dialects. Consequently, any future and more balanced typological – areal classification of (East) Slavic languages – also within the broader European context – should consider the position and clustering of the dialectal area examined here.

Finally, beyond questions concerning the origin of the synthetic future and its comparison with its analogue in the Romance languages, it would be equally important – following suggestions advanced by earlier scholarship – to determine whether this type of future is semantically equivalent to the more widespread analytic future in both Standard Ukrainian and its dialects in a changed sociolinguistic and cultural context.

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### Future Tense in East Polissian (Border) Dialects

#### Abstract

This article provides further insight into the use, function, and distribution of the imperfective future in East Polissian (border) dialects within the broader context of the East Slavic languages. Futurity – particularly the issue of the imperfective synthetic future in Standard Ukrainian, often discussed in relation to the analogous Romance pattern – has received substantial scholarly attention over recent decades. By contrast, relatively little attention has been devoted to the use and distribution of imperfective future constructions, both analytic (periphrastic) and synthetic, in the Central and East Polissian dialects. An examination of these constructions, alongside other dialectal morphosyntactic and typological features, is essential for achieving a more accurate areal-typological characterization of the (East) Slavic languages.

### Czas przyszły w dialektach wschodniopoleskich (granicznych)

#### Abstrakt

Niniejszy artykuł dostarcza dokładniejszego wglądu w użycie, funkcję i dystrybucję niedokonanego czasu przyszłego w dialektach wschodniopoleskich (granicznych) w szerszym kontekście języków wschodniosłowiańskich. Zagadnienie form czasu przyszłego – a zwłaszcza kwestia niedokonanego syntetycznego czasu przyszłego w standardowym języku ukraińskim, często omawiana w odniesieniu do analogicznego wzorca romańskiego – spotkało się w ostatnich dekadach ze znacznym zainteresowaniem badaczy. Stosunkowo niewiele uwagi poświęcono jednak użyciu i dystrybucji niedokonanych form czasu przyszłego, zarówno analitycznych (peryfrastycznych), jak i syntetycznych, w dialektach środkowo- i wschodniopoleskich. Analiza tych konstrukcji, wraz z innymi cechami morfosyntaktycznymi i typologicznymi dialektów, jest niezbędna dla uzyskania dokładniejszej charakterystyki arealno-typologicznej języków (wschodnio)słowiańskich.