## A modal analysis of the Thcho future

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This study explores the semantics of the future tense in Tłįchǫ, a Dene language spoken in the Northwest Territories. The future tense is acknowledged to include modal elements (e.g. Kaufmann, 2005; Tonhauser, 2011a) as it is used to express expectations and predictions based on the speakers' generalisations and beliefs about the world, and any assertion in the future tense relies on speakers' knowledge and assumptions of the likelihood of events based on their previous experience (Kratzer, 2013; Werner, 2006).

Previous syntactic analysis of the Tł<sub>i</sub>chǫ tense system (Welch, 2015a,b) suggested that Tł<sub>i</sub>chǫ is a tensed language, and specifically shows a distinction between future and non-future tense. In this paper I analyse previously published Tł<sub>i</sub>chǫ sources, following Tonhauer's (2011a, 2011b) criteria for semantic analysis of the future, and bring evidence that the Tł<sub>i</sub>chǫ future is a modal and not a tense, and that Tł<sub>i</sub>chǫ is a tenseless language: future morphology is not obligatory for expressing the temporal meaning of the future in all contexts (1-2); future morphology is not exclusive to the temporal meaning of the future (3-4); and the future is relative (5).

Previous accounts of the Tł<sub>i</sub>chǫ future (Welch, 2015b) suggest that the future morphology is obligatory (1), which supports a tense analysis. However, an analysis of conditional clauses suggests that future morphology is not obligatory in all contexts (2):

00	•	1 0,	-	
(1)	Dàanaà	satsǫ	edza	ha.
	certainly	tomorrow	cold	FUT
	'Certainly	tomorrow will be c	cold.'	

(Welch 2015b)

(2)	Ats'ǫ	goyatı	k'è	gokę	gıts'ò
	always	our.language	according.to	our.children	to.them
	gots'ende	nındè	gık'èzhǫ	ade	ha.
	speak	if	they.know	get.to.	be FUT

Lit. 'If we always speak in our language to our children, they will get to know it.' (Helen Tobie, YDFN 2007:11)

Similarly, a tense analysis of the future requires the future to only carry a temporal meaning without an additional modal meaning, as has been argued by Welch (2015a) (3). However, a modal bouletic use of the future morpheme is attested in the Tł<sub>2</sub>ch<sub>0</sub> translation of the New Testament (DTC, 2003/2008) (4):

(3)	Wet'à	gots'edee	niìhchi		ha	
	wet'à	gots'edee	nı-ìh-chı		ha	
	with	we.speak.NOM	up-IPFV.1sg.subj-take.IPI	FV	FUT	
	'I will	pick up the phon	e.'			
	*'I should/would/must pick up the phone.'					
			(We	elch 2015a:	:69 example 40c)	

(4)	Nòhts God	į wecheekeè his.servant	gha for	k'àowo boss	0	elįį be.NOM	sìı FOC	weghǫ about.him
	2	nezį-le good-NEG	gòhłį exist		ha FUT	nıìle. be.NEG		
NRS	V: 'Nov	w a bishop must l	be abov	e reproa	ach'			
			(1 Timothy 3:2, DTC, 2003/2008)					

Lastly, Tonhauser (2011a) argues that if the future is a tense, the Reference Time (RT) and the Event Time (ET) are always in the future of the Utterance Time (UT). Whereas, if the future is a modal, the ET can be located in the future of RT regardless of UT. This can be seen in (5), where the future morphology is used even though both ET and RT are in the past of UT:

(5)	Nàte ekò	ekǫ	ts'ò	anade	ha-le	gha
	dream when	there	for	go.back	FUT-NEG	COMP
	weghǫnatiet'ǫ warn.from.it		ťà because	Galılee Galilee	nèk'e ts'ò land for	ajà. get.PFV

*Lit. 'Because he was warned when dreaming not to go back there, he went to the land of Galilee.'* 

NRSV: 'And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee.' (Matthew 2:22, DTC 2003/2008)

Keywords: *Tl*<sub>i</sub>*ch*<sub>0</sub>, *future*, *semantics*, *tenseless languages* 

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