

## Future participles in the writings of Zamenhof

Natalia DANKOVA

*Morituri te salutamus*  
(We who are about to die salute you)  
(Ni mortontoj cin salutas)

**Resumo.** *Participoj estontecaj en la verkaro de Zamenhof*

Ni studas la uzadon de kompleksaj tensoj kiuj enhavas aktivaajn kaj pasivaajn participojn *-onta* kaj *-ota* en la *Originala Verkaro* de Zamenhof. La jida, rusa kaj pola, lingvoj ĉefe uzitaj de Zamenhof, ne havas similaajn participojn kaj ne povis helpi lin ellabori regulojn, eĉ ne implicitajn, pri la uzado de la participoj *-onta* kaj *-ota* en Esperanto. Tiu ĉi studo celas klarigi la Zamenhofan uzadon de kompleksaj tensoj kiuj enhavas *-onta* kaj *-ota*, ilian oftecon kaj iliajn tempajn kaj aspektajn valorojn.

**Résumé.** *Participes futurs dans les écrits de Zamenhof*

Nous examinons l'usage des temps composés contenant des participes futurs actifs et passifs dans les écrits de L. Zamenhof. Ni le yiddish, le russe ou le polonais, les langues principales qu'utilisait Zamenhof, n'ayant pas de participes futurs, ne pouvaient guider Zamenhof pour fixer des règles, mêmes pas implicites, de l'emploi des participes futurs dans les temps composés. Cette étude cherche à éclairer l'usage des temps composés contenant des participes futurs dans les écrits originaux du fondateur de la langue, la fréquence de ces temps et leurs valeurs temporo-aspectuelles.

**Abstract.** We examine the use of compound tenses containing active and passive future participles in the writings of L. Zamenhof. Since Yiddish, Russian and Polish, the principal languages used by Zamenhof, do not have future participles, they offered no guidance for him to set rules, not even implicit ones, about the use of future participles in compound tenses. This study aims to shed some light on the use of compound tenses containing future participles in the original writings, the frequency of their use and their temporal-aspectual values.

### Introduction

In this article, we examine the use of compound tenses containing active and passive future participles in the writings of L. Zamenhof. Cognitively, the future is a more complex time frame than the present or the past, since the

events described have not yet occurred and indeed may not take place. Given this uncertainty regarding the future, it is easier to speak of events gone by than of those yet to come. In languages, there are generally fewer verbal forms of the future than of the past (cf. Comrie 1985; 1976). There are also more means of expressing order relations (anteriority—simultaneousness—posteriority) in the past than in the future in languages where these means exist, French and Italian for example, in which many of the verb tenses have the purpose of describing the past.

Esperanto has three simple tenses and three types of active and passive participles (cf. Table 1). Compound tenses are achieved by combining the verb *esti* ‘to be’ conjugated in the present, past or future tense, with one of the six participles. Formal sequences of tenses do not exist in Esperanto as they do in French or Italian.

Table 1. Tenses and participles in Esperanto

<i>Verbal form</i>	<i>Conjugated verb</i>	<i>Active participle</i>	<i>Passive participle</i>
<i>Present</i>	mi manĝas ‘I eat’	manĝanta ‘eating’	manĝata ‘being eaten’
<i>Past</i>	mi manĝis ‘I ate’	manĝinta ‘having eaten’	manĝita ‘having been eaten’
<i>Future</i>	mi manĝos ‘I will eat’	manĝonta ‘about to eat’	manĝota ‘about to be eaten’

Parallels between verbal tenses and participles in Esperanto, and also in other languages, are merely an appearance: so-called “past” participles often have a perfective value, while “present” participles often have an imperfect value. The difference between past and present participles in Esperanto is of an aspectual rather than temporal nature. This issue has been discussed at length in our previous works about temporality in spoken Esperanto (cf. Dankova 1997; 2009). The terminology used to discuss temporality is based on a model by Klein (1994), who distinguishes between form and function, allowing for the discussion of temporality in languages with different temporal-aspectual systems. The traditional terminology used in many languages to discuss verbal forms in terms of the “present,” “past” and “future” creates confusion, specifically as far as participles are concerned:

Selon B. Comrie (1985:58), les formes participiales comportent un « relative tense » qu’il définit en substance de la façon suivante: le temps relatif ne spécifie pas que le moment de référence doit être le moment de l’énonciation, contrairement au temps déictique[...]. D’après cette définition, il est indéniable que les gérondifs et les participes véhiculent des « temps relatifs ». (Tournadre & Jamborová 2009:458)

Many researchers (Wilmet 1997; Gosselin 2005; Tournadre 2004; 2010; Tournadre & Jamborová 2009) propose an interpretation of verbal forms in their complexity, taking into account temporal, aspectual and modal aspects:

It would seem that the traditional labelling of verb tenses, from which modern linguistics has never been able to completely free itself, largely contributes to perpetuating the erroneous conception consisting in attributing monolithic meanings to verb forms. Thus, the label *present* in French helps anchor the idea that the verb form qualified as such conveys essentially a meaning linked to the present. However, this form not only conveys the present, but also the future and in many cases, the past. Therefore, beyond time, it conveys an aspectual and modal representation. What has just been said about the present tense is valid for most temporal forms in French and more generally for verbal tenses in many languages of the world.

This multiparametric conception of verb tenses is similar to the one elaborated by Wilmet (1997:329): “Each [verbal] drawer attaches to a formula that combines a modal variable with a temporal variable and an aspectual variable.” Gosselin (2005) and Tournadre (2004; 2009) have expressed similar viewpoints. Therefore, there exists an *interdependence between the temporal, aspectual and modal elements*. (Tournadre 2010)

While past and present participles exist in several languages, future participles are absent in many, including those used by L. Zamenhof. For example, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Aramaic do not possess future participles. However, Latin and Classical Greek, of which Zamenhof had a passive knowledge, had future participles, but these languages did not provide him with examples of living usage to sharpen his sensitivity to the concept of the future participle. As for Romance languages, they did not inherit future participles.

The mother tongue, or first language (L1) remains the frame of reference when learning other languages (L2). Its grammatical categories and lexicon influence the use of L2. This aspect has been well documented through considerable research in the second language acquisition (Carroll & Lambert 2003; Dankova 1997; Gass & Selinker Eds. 1992; Klein 1986; Odlin 1989). Zamenhof’s first “language” was Russian. In 1906 he wrote: “Mia gepatra lingvo estas la rusa; sed mi nun parolas pli pole” ‘My mother tongue is Russian, but now, I speak Polish more’ (Zamenhof 1929:523). Yiddish, Russian and Polish greatly influenced Esperanto, a language that, unlike an L2, was not to be learned but to be invented completely. Since Yiddish, Russian and Polish, the principal languages used by Zamenhof, do not have future participles, they offered no guidance for him to set rules, even implicit ones, about the use of future participles in compound tenses. This study aims to shed some light on the use of compound tenses containing future participles in the original writings of the founder of Esperanto, the frequency of their use and their temporal-aspectual values.

## Methods and data

The writings of Zamenhof were first edited in 1929, and then in 1983 (Zamenhof 1929/1983). The 1983 publication has been used as a source for this study. Of the 604 pages of the document, some contain translations of other languages into Esperanto.

We have only taken into consideration the original writings in Esperanto. We have identified all of the occurrences of compound tenses containing future participles, and examined the context in which they appear, the nature of the texts (writings destined for publication, speeches, correspondence, etc.) as well as the time of writing, foreseeing a potential evolution in the use of tenses. Future participles used outside of compound tenses were not counted. Those that have been fixed in usage as adjectives were not considered either: this includes numerous occurrences of *venonta* ‘next’ and *estonta* ‘future’. Even though in their form, these may be active future participles, their meaning and usage in the language lead us to consider them as adjectives, especially since Esperanto does not contain corresponding adjectives: for example, *la venonta kongreso* literally means ‘the congress to come’ but also ‘the next congress’, while *la venonta semajno* usually translates to ‘next week’, not ‘the week to come’. The passage from one part of discourse to another is a frequent phenomenon in languages, and Esperanto is no exception.

In the examples we are quoting, the date indicates the year in which the text was written, while the page number refers to the second edition of Zamenhof’s writings (1929/1983), not the original published text; for each excerpt, we specify the nature of the texts (article, speech, letter, etc.).

## Discussion and results

In the analyzed corpus, we found only six occurrences of compound tenses containing a future participle: four of the six contain the verb *esti* ‘to be’ in the present tense, as well as one passive future participle; see Examples (1)–(4). The participles are:

- (*estas*) *ricevota* ‘that will be received’
- (*estas*) *akceptota* ‘that will be accepted’
- (*estas*) *kronotaj* ‘that will be crowned (with success)’
- (*estas*) *aprobota* ‘that will be approved’

Let us take a closer look at each example by asking two questions:

- What temporal relationship is expressed by the compound tense?
- Why was the passive future participle favoured over other options?

- (1) Memoru, ke se eĉ la esperata nombro estas ne ricevota, vi nenion perdas, sendante la promeson. (1888; Antaŭparolo al la *Dua Libro de l' lingvo Internacia*; p. 29)

Remember that even if the number that is hoped for will not be received, you have nothing to lose by sending in your promise.

In the first example, the compound tense appears in a hypothetical context. The subject *la nombro* ‘the number’ is accompanied by the passive present participle *esperata* ‘that is hoped for’. In paraphrasing, we obtain the following: ‘[...] even though we will not receive the number we are hoping for, you have nothing to lose [...]’. Zamenhof asks that people committing to learning Esperanto send him their name to be included in the statistics. Therefore, the responses will be received within the period following Zamenhof’s request, after the time of utterance (TU). This period is seen as not being limited in time: the number of responses that is hoped for will likely not be received, and no deadline to send in a response has been set.

TU [...] →

The absence of a final temporal limit could explain the use of the passive future participle rather than the passive past tense participle *ricevota* ‘that was/has been received’.

In example (2a) below, the compound tense is in a subordinate clause introducing a condition; Zamenhof repeats a general statement that is always valid: people have different opinions, and no opinion is accepted without discussion. The statement and the verbs are therefore in the generic present tense: *pensas* ‘(he) thinks’ and *estas* ‘is’:

- (2a) [...] Se iu [...] eĉ pensas ke nur lia opinio estas la sole vera kaj la sendispute akceptota de la tuta mondo [...] (1893; *La Esperantisto*; p. 169)

[...] If someone [...] thinks that only his opinion is correct and that it is to be accepted by the entire world without controversy [...]

The verb group of the subordinate clause contains two elements—an adjective: (*lia opinio estas vera* ‘(his opinion) is correct’ and a passive future participle that refers to a moment taking place after the first: (*lia opinio estas akceptota* ‘(his opinion is) to be accepted’. Thus, the acceptance of an opinion happens after this opinion has been formulated, not at the same time, which makes the form *estas akceptata* ‘is accepted’ that contains a passive present participle impossible. The form *estas akceptita* ‘has been accepted’ would lead one to understand that the moment a person believes his opinion is correct, the opinion has already been accepted without discussion.

What nuance would a compound form of the verb *esti* ‘to be’ in the future tense bring to the passive past participle *akceptita* ‘accepted’ (cf. 2b)? Unlike the passive future participle that conveys the idea that the opinion is to be accepted, but says nothing about any final acceptance, the passive past participle presents the acceptance as being complete in the future:

- (2b) Se iu [...] eĉ pensas ke nur lia opinio estas la sole vera kaj estos la sendispute akceptita de la tuta mondo [...]  
 If someone [...] thinks that only his opinion is correct and that it will be accepted by the whole world without controversy [...]

The use of simple forms removes any aspectual nuance. The future form of the verb *akcepti* ‘to accept’, in the active form, expresses posteriority in relation to the present *estas vera* ‘is correct’:

- (2c) Se iu [...] eĉ pensas ke nur lia opinio estas la sole vera kaj la tuta mondo sendispute akceptos ĝin.  
 If someone [...] thinks that only his opinion is correct and that the entire world will accept it without controversy [...]

Excerpt (3) offers a similar example wherein the compound tense containing a passive future participle refers to a later moment. This form is used in a subordinate clause and the context is hypothetical: the verbs *aparteni* ‘to belong’ and *trovi* ‘to find’ are used in the conditional mood:

- (3) Sed se nia laborado apartenus al tiuj dankoportaj aferoj, kiuj estas kronotaj de tuja granda sukceso, tiam ni ja facile trovus milionojn da laborantoj [...] (1893; *La Esperantisto*; p. 181)  
 But if our work were to count among these things prompting thanks that would be immediately crowned with great success, then we would find millions of collaborators [...]

Excerpt (4) presents the same characteristics as in (2a) with regard to the context and the temporal-aspectual value of the passive future participle:

- (4) [...] Kaj tiam li jam tute sendube atingos la necesan nombron da voĉoj, se lia propono estas effective bona kaj aprobita (1893; *La Esperantisto*; p. 184)  
 [...] And therefore he will without a doubt reach the number of votes necessary if his proposal is indeed good, and it will be to be approved.

The choice to use the passive future participle is influenced by the unfinished nature of the event that, not being limited in time, is presented as something that will happen in the future. In the first four excerpts, the context is

hypothetical and the compound tense containing a passive future participle is used in a subordinate clause.

The following excerpt presents the only example of the use of the passive future participle in the context of something that has happened in the past:

- (5) [...] Tial mi prenis sur min pretigi tiun ĉi parton, kiu estis eldonota poste kune kun la partoj en aliaj kvar lingvoj kaj provizore komencis eliradi per apartaj kajeroj [...] (1910; Antaŭklarigado al *Proverbaro Esperanta*; p. 53)

[...] Thus I have committed to preparing this part that was to be published later, along with the parts in four other languages, and that in the meantime has started to be published in separate documents [...]

In the past tense, *estis eldonota* ‘was to be published’ describes an event that was to take place later. Zamenhof wrote this in 1910 referring to events that took place in 1905. The complete edition in five languages he speaks of was published in 1910. Thus, Zamenhof provides a glimpse of an event that is expected to take place, although it is not guaranteed to do so. What would happen if we replaced *estis eldonota* ‘was to be published’ with *estos eldonita* ‘will be published’? As we have shown in previous works (cf. Dankova 1997; 2009) the passive past participle is used with a perfective value. Thus, the perspective of the narrator would change. In 1910, while speaking of events that had taken place in 1905, Zamenhof already knew that the work had been published, and could have indicated this by using *estos eldonita* ‘will be published’, but by using *estis eldonota* ‘was to be published’, he keeps the reader in suspense with regard to the outcome of the publication plan.

Excerpt (6a) presents the only instance of a compound tense containing the verbe *esti* ‘to be’ in the present tense, along with an active future participle. Once again, it is used in a subordinate clause:

- (6a) Ĉiuj ideoj, kiuj estas ludontaj gravan rolon en la historio de la homaro, havas ĉiam tiun saman sorton [...] (1900; *Esenco kaj Estonteco*, p. 276)

All of the ideas that will play an important role in the history of humanity always have the same fate [...]

The context is the generic present. The compound tense conveys an event that is presented as something that will take place: “the ideas that will play an important role in history”. In our opinion, the use of the simple form of the future tense (*-os*) would have exactly the same effect, and the compound tense does not bring any particular nuance with regard to the simple form of the future tense:

- (6b) Ĉiuj ideoj, kiuj ludos gravan rolon en la historio de la homaro, havas ĉiam tiun saman sorton.

All of the ideas that will play an important role in the history of humanity always have the same fate.

The six excerpts above are taken from formal texts. No other examples were found in Zamenhof's correspondence, no matter how formal, nor in his speeches, which means that these forms were not spontaneously used. The number of occurrences of compound tenses containing a future participle (six in total) does not allow us to speak of any implicit rules of use that Zamenhof would have adhered to. The use of these forms remains marginal.

Unlike in the case of compound tenses containing a future participle, future participles—especially passive participles—are most often used. These participles act as alternatives to subordinate clauses:

- (7a) [...] en la alfabeto ellernota de ĉiuj esperantistoj [...] (1891; *La Esperantisto*; p. 91)

[...] in the alphabet that will be learned by all Esperantists [...]

next to

- (7b) [...] en la alfabeto kiun ĉiuj esperantistoj ellernos [...]

[...] in the alphabet that all Esperantists will have learned [...]

- (7c) [...] en la alfabeto kiu estos ellernota de ĉiuj esperantistoj [...]

[...] in the alphabet that will be learned by all Esperantists [...]

In the original excerpts, the passive future participle *ellernota* 'that will be learned' contains a prefix serving here to mark the perfective value (cf. Dankova 1997; 2009). The form therefore refers to an event presented as having been accomplished in the period following the time of utterance. Example (7b), which is another option, drops the passive structure of the original and adds a subordinate clause. As for (7c), a subordinate clause replacing a participial phrase contains a double marking of posteriority and/or the future: once with the verb *esti* 'to be' in the future tense and another by the suffix (-*ot*) of the future participle. Alongside (7b) and (7c), the original remains the most economical option.

Excerpt 8 offers an example of aspectual opposition described by the passive future participle *proponota* '(that) will be proposed' and a passive past participle *reformita* 'reformed':

- (8) Kiam la tuta laboro, kun ĉiuj eble venontaj plibonigoj, ŝanĝoj kaj aldonoj, estos finita kaj niaj legantoj havos jam finitan pentraĵon de la tuta proponota reformita lingvo, tiam mi proponos al la membroj de



la Ligo Esperantista decidi per voĉdonado la sekvantajn demandojn [...] (1893–1894; *La Esperantisto*; p. 186)

When all of the work, along with all possible improvements, changes and additions, will be finished and our readers will have a finished portrait of the entire reformed language as it will be proposed, then I will propose to the members of the League of Esperantists to decide, by voting, on the following questions [...]

Zamenhof is therefore speaking of a language that will be proposed after having been reformed. All of the elements he mentions will take place after the moment of utterance. It is clear that the participles used in the phrase have an aspectual rather than temporal value: perfective with regard to the passive past participle and prospective in the case of the passive future participle.

Another example of aspectual opposition created by participles can be found in excerpt (9):

- (9) Ĉu la Kongreso deziras akcepti pretan organizacion, aŭ ĝi deziras nur elekti provizoran Centran Komitaton, kiu, esplorinte ĉiujn prezentitajn kaj prezentotajn projektojn, mem ellaboras definitivan projekton de organizacio, kiun ĝi prezentos por alprobo al la venonta dua Kongreso? (1905; *Lingvo Internacia*; p. 235)

Does the Congress wish to accept a ready-made organisation, or does it wish only to elect a provisional Central Committee that, having explored all of the projects already presented and that will be presented, will itself develop the final organisational project that it will present for approval at the second Congress?

If verbal forms had a strictly temporal value, the use of so-called past forms (*-is, -ita, -inta, -inte*) would be reserved for the past (before the time of utterance (TU)) and the use of so-called future forms to the future (after TU). Thus, the combination of the verb *esti* ‘to be’ with a participle should follow the same logic: both should agree in time, for example:

- (10a) Ili estis konsentintaj. They agreed.  
 (10b) Ili estas konsentantaj. They are agreeing.  
 (10c) Ili estos konsentontaj. They will agree.

or

- (11a) Ili estis anstataŭgitaĵoj. They have been replaced.  
 (11b) Ili estas anstataŭgataĵoj. They are replaced.  
 (11c) Ili estos anstataŭgotaj. They will be replaced.

Neither Zamenhof nor actual use of Esperanto follows this reasoning. Participles allow for the introduction within a time of aspectual distinctions:

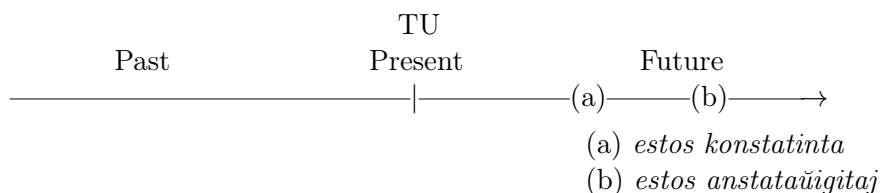
- (12) La projekto estos finita antaŭ la fino de la monato.  
The project will be finished before the end of the month.

This logic is implicit in Zamenhof's writings:

- (13) [...] Kaj poste la Lingva Komitato povus periode publikigadi listojn da vortoj, pri kiuj ĝi estos konstatinta, ke la vivo kaj kompetentula uzado fiksas por ili alian formon, ol kiun ili ĝis nun havis en la provizora vortarego; sed ĉiuj vortoj, kiuj oficiale ne estos anstataŭigitaj, restos uzeblaj. (1911; *Lingvaj Respondoj*; p. 256)

[...] And after, the Linguistic Committee could publish lists of words for which it will have noticed the life and use by competent people have secured a different form from the one these words had in the great dictionary; but all of the words that will not be officially replaced may be used.

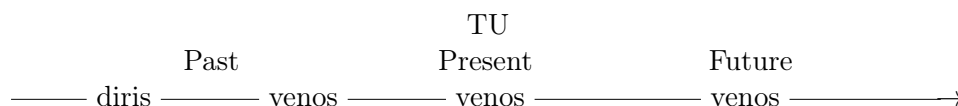
*Estos konstatinta* means that something will be noticed, and *estos anstataŭigitaj* that the words will be replaced: both events that are presented as accomplished (perfective aspect) will take place in the future:



Simple tenses also go beyond their purely temporal function:

- (14) Li diris ke li venos al la festo.  
He said he will come to the party.  
He said he would come to the party.

In the absence of other contextual elements, *li venos* can be situated in the past, the present or the future, but in all cases after *li diris* 'he said':



The *-os* of *li venos* 'he will come/he would come' indicates a relationship of posteriority rather than the future tense. The use of the future form to express posteriority and of the past to express anteriority is common. Examples (15)

in Russian and (16) in Modern Hebrew, in which the first verb is in the past tense and the second is in the future, are interpretable in the same way as example (14):

- (15) Он сказал, что он придет на праздник.  
 On skazal (past, perfective) tchto on pridet (future, perfective) na prazdnik.  
 He said he will come to the party.
- (16) הוא אמר שהוא יבוא למסיבה.  
 Hu amar (past) shehu yavo (future) lamesiba.  
 He said he will come to the party.

It is important to remember that Russian and Polish favour the expression of aspect over time. While Zamenhof does not speak of aspect in Esperanto, this influence manifests itself in the use of verbal forms in Esperanto, especially in the case of participles.

## Conclusion

Zamenhof advised against overusing compound verbal tenses. In his usage, there are few compound tenses containing future participles. The rare cases are attested in formal texts destined for publication. These forms always appear in subordinate clauses. Given the marginal number of occurrences (six in total), it would be risky to try to deduce from this an implicit rule of usage. Nevertheless, our interpretation brings us to attribute to them a prospective aspect value: the aspectual opposition would serve to present an event that is expected to occur, with relation to another event taken as a moment of reference. The rarity of future participles in compound tenses could be explained, on the one hand, by the conceptual complexity of such forms and by their absence in the languages that Zamenhof used; and, on the other hand, by the competition with other, simpler forms.

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Natalia Dankova completed her doctorate in language sciences in 1997, in Paris. She has worked in the fields of language teaching (French as a second or foreign language, Italian, Russian) and of research in psycholinguistics and applied phonetics. A faculty member at the Université du Québec en Outaouais, she currently teaches linguistics, history of the French language, second language acquisition and phonetics for the Department of Language Studies. Natalia remains active in the field of the francization of immigrants by offering assistance to teachers of French as a second language, and advising and supporting immigrants throughout their transition. She publishes scientific papers concerning second language acquisition, psycholinguistics, varieties of French, multiculturalism and spoken Esperanto. Natalia Dankova is the first author and researcher of *Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens* (Canadian Language Benchmarks for French L2) published by the Government of Canada in 2012.

*Author's address:* Université du Québec en Outaouais, Département d'Études langagières, 283, boulevard Alexandre-Taché, Gatineau (Québec) J8X 3X7, Canada

*E-mail address:* <[natalia.dankova@uqo.ca](mailto:natalia.dankova@uqo.ca)>

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