*Linguistics*

# Aspectual Peculiarities in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*: A Comparative Study with the Aspects of the *Gudea Cylinder*

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**Abstract.** This study examines the expression of verbal aspect in the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, with particular focus on the imperfective domain. Through a close analysis of the glossed and lemmatized data, it studies how aspectual distinctions – particularly between the perfective and imperfective – function in narrative, dialogic and modal contexts. Particular attention is paid to morphological strategies such as **marû** inflection, stem reduplication and the suffix *-ed*, each of which contributes to the expression of temporality, intentionality and discourse structure. To highlight genre-specific variation, this paper offers a comparative analysis of the *Gudea* inscriptions, whose aspectual system – although morphologically rich – is functionally constrained by the conventions of ritual and institutional discourse. While *-ed* forms in the *Gudea* corpus occur only in the 3rd person intransitive constructions, the *Gilgamesh* corpus shows a wider distribution, including rare but significant evidence in the 1st and 2nd persons. The contrast between the two corpora shows a shift from a rigid, ceremonial aspectual system to a semantically and pragmatically more flexible narrative grammar. These findings suggest that aspect in Sumerian is not only a grammatical category, but also a reflection of textual voice, narrative structure and cultural worldview. The study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Sumerian verbal morphology and offers further implications for typological and diachronic analyses of ancient Near Eastern texts. © *2025 Bull. Natl. Acad. Sci. Georg.*

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## Introduction

The expression of aspect in Sumerian verbs remains a key issue in linguistic research, especially within the *Gilgamesh* corpus. This study analyzes the distribution and function of perfective and imperfective forms in the Sumerian *Gilgamesh* texts, based on lemmatized and glossed data derived from original translations. The aim is to clarify how aspect operates within narrative structure and to address interpretive challenges.

A precise understanding of aspect in *Gilgamesh* is essential for both Sumerian linguistics and comparative studies with Akkadian. While prior studies offer general aspectual distinctions, close textual

analysis reveals significant ambiguities. This study identifies emerging patterns, highlights problematic cases, and explores how aspect supports narrative cohesion and verbal choice in Sumerian literature.

## Aspectual Background

**General.** Sumerian verbal aspect is traditionally distinguished as **perfective** (denoting completed actions) vs. **imperfective** (ongoing, habitual, iterative, or modal actions). These categories are manifested not through a single morpheme but through a constellation of both morphological and lexical strategies:

| Strategy | Function | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Marû inflection | Non-completive / imperfective | *gi₄* "to return", *til₃* "to live" |
| Reduplication | Iterative / durative / intensifying | *gi₄-gi₄-e "to return"* |
| *-ed* suffix | Progressive / habitual / purposive imperfective | *til-ed-a* "to live, to complete", *e₁₁-ed-a* "to go up, down; to bring down" |
| Lexical Aktionsart | Stative or durative meaning inherent to verb | *zi* "to live", *dug₄* "to sit" |
| Prefixal constructions | Ventive + object markers shaping modality | *mu-un-ni-ib-gi₄-gi₄-e* "He repeatedly went back to him" |

Previous studies (Jagersma, 2010; Edzard, 2003; Attinger, 1993; Thomsen, 1984, among others) have proposed various aspectual classifications of Sumerian verbal forms. Yet, significant ambiguity remains – particularly in literary texts such as *Gilgamesh* – where forms may be contextually fluid or semantically underspecified.

**Perfective.** In Sumerian, the perfective aspect is not marked by a specific morphological element. However, certain inflectional patterns and conjugation types – when interpreted within context – tend to correlate with perfective readings. In particular, the prefixal chain, pronominal affixes, and tense/mood forms may combine in a way that suggests completed action. The perfective aspect is often determined contextually – completed action, narrative sequence, or resultative meaning.

(1)      *gu₄-gim ki gal-la ba-e-gub*
         *gu₄.d=gen     ki      gal=a      ba-e-gub-Ø*
         ox=EQU      earth   big=LOC    MID-LOC-stand-3SG.S/DO
         "Then Gilgames stood up like a bull on the great earth."
         *ETCSL t.1.8.1.5, line 88 (Gilgamesh and Huwawa A)*
         https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/c1815.htm#line85

Despite the absence of an explicit perfective marker, the context and use of the *ba-* prefix chain suggest a completed, punctual event – "stood up." The verb *gub* "to stand" occurs in narrative sequence, following typical perfective usage in Sumerian.

Although **reduplication** of the verbal root is typically associated with the **imperfective aspect**, particularly in expressing **iterative** or **intensified** activity, its interpretation is not always unambiguous. In most cases, reduplication suggests a prolonged or repeated action, which aligns naturally with non-completive semantics. However, certain **reduplicated forms** – especially in literary or poetic contexts – may appear in **perfective environments**, where the action is clearly bounded or complete.

These instances raise the question of whether reduplication in such cases serves a **stylistic or expressive function** rather than a strict aspectual one. Alternatively, they may reflect **lexicalized** or **fossilized** forms in which the reduplication no longer signals aspectual nuance. Such ambiguity necessitates a close examination of **context**, **inflectional class**, and the **semantic nature of the verb** itself.

This tension underscores the importance of not treating morphological markers in isolation but rather evaluating them in the broader framework of syntactic and narrative usage. Further examples from the *Gilgamesh* corpus will help illustrate how such ambiguous cases are distributed and interpreted.

(2)  *am-gal-e ba-na₂ ḫur nu-mu-un-da-an-zi-zi*

| *am* | *gal=e* | *ba-na₂-Ø* | *ḫur* | *nu=mu-n-da-n-zi.g~zi.g-Ø* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| wild.bull | big=ERG | MID-sleep-3SG.S/DO | ever | NEG=VENT-3SG-COM-3SG.A-rise~RDPL-3SG.S/DO |

"The great wild bull has lain down; (from now on) he will no longer rise."
*ETCSL t.1.8.1.3.A:1, line 1 (Death of Gilgamesh A, Seg. A)*
https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/c1813.htm#line1A1

Here, the verb *zi-zi* ("to rise" in reduplicated form) occurs in a **negative future** context, following a perfective action (*ba-na₂* "he lay down"). Although reduplication might typically signal a durative or habitual sense, the clause implies a **completed** and **irreversible** event: the subject will no longer rise. The aspectual reading here is **bounded and final**, aligning more closely with perfective semantics despite the morphological reduplication.

These examples demonstrate that **reduplication alone** is not always a reliable indicator of aspect, as its function may be shaped by **semantic**, **syntactic**, and **discourse-level** features. This calls for a nuanced approach to Sumerian verbal aspect, one that resists simplistic morphological mapping and instead attends to **contextual cues** and **inflectional class interactions**.

**Imperfective.** The imperfective aspect in Sumerian is not consistently marked by a single morphological feature but is instead indicated through a range of grammatical and lexical strategies. Following established treatments (cf. Attinger 1993; Jagersma 2010), we may distinguish four principal means by which imperfectivity is expressed in the verbal system:

**Verbal Inflection Type**

Sumerian distinguishes between two primary inflectional patterns, commonly referred to as **ḫamṭu** and **marû**, a terminology introduced by Yoshikawa (1968) based on the traditional Akkadian terminology. The **ḫamṭu** pattern typically correlates with perfective or completive meaning, whereas the **marû** pattern is associated with non-completive, progressive, or habitual readings.

In the present study, however, we follow the terminology proposed by Jagersma (2010) and some previous scholars, referring to these patterns as **perfective** and **imperfective** respectively, in order to emphasize the functional and aspectual distinctions that better align with cross-linguistic typological frameworks.

The inflectional form alone, especially when supported by context, often allows for a reliable interpretation of aspect.

**Lexical Aspect (Aktionsart)**

Some verbs inherently express durative or stative meanings and thus receive an imperfective interpretation regardless of formal marking. These include verbs of posture (e.g., *dug₄* "to sit"), state (e.g., *zi* "to live"), or perception. Such lexical semantics contribute to aspectual reading independently of inflectional form.

**Reduplication of the verbal stem**

Stem reduplication functions as a morphological strategy to mark **iterativity**, **habituality**, or **ongoing repetition** of an action – all of which fall within the imperfective domain. This feature is attested across multiple genres and registers, and is often paired with imperfective inflection.

**Imperfective Suffix *-ed***

The suffix *-ed*, though not universally present, is the most regular and productive **morphological marker** associated directly with imperfective aspect in Sumerian. Its presence typically correlates with progressive or habitual meaning, often in combination with marû inflection or stem reduplication.

**Usage of imperfective in *Gilgamesh*.** A notable and frequent use of the **imperfective aspect** in the *Gilgamesh* texts occurs at the **beginning of *direct speech***. This is a key strategy for introducing dialogue and establishing the **ongoing nature** of the utterance. In these instances, the verb *gi₄* "to return, to answer" is often **reduplicated** and inflected in the imperfective form, typically in **ventive constructions** with infixed pronominal markers, such as in the following examples:

(3)  

| *arad₂(aradxkur)-da-ni* | *En-ki-du₁₀-e* | *inim* | *mu-un-ni-ib-gi₄(gi@g)-gi₄(gi@g)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *arad=ane* | *en.ki.du₁₀=e* | *inim=Ø* | *mu-nna-ni-b-gi₄~gi₄-e* |
| slave=3SG.POSS | Enkidu=ERG | word=ABS | VENT-3SG.IO-in-3N.DO-turn~RDPL-3SG.A:IPFV |

"His slave Enkidu answered him."
*ETCSL t.1.8.1.5, line 8 (Gilgamesh and Huwawa A)*
https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/c1815.htm#line85

These uses of the imperfective not only express **ongoing action** but also signal a **narrative shift**, marking the **introduction of dialogue**. By using the imperfective, the text emphasizes the unfolding, **continuous nature** of the response, distinguishing it from the more static narrative description that precedes it.

This pattern is consistent throughout the epic and demonstrates the important role of the imperfective aspect in **structuring discourse** – particularly as a marker for **direct speech initiation**. The imperfective, in this context, is not simply a reflection of the **duration** of the action, but also serves to highlight the transition into a new narrative phase, where interaction between characters begins.

The **imperfective aspect** in Sumerian is also used to express **goals** or **plans** for future actions. This usage emphasizes the **ongoing nature** or **intended outcome** of the action, focusing not on completion but on the process itself.

For example, in the following *Gilgamesh* and *Aga* texts, the imperfective verb *til* (to complete) is used in a nominalized phrase indicating the **goal** of the action:

(4)  

| *pu₂(lagabxu) til-li(še-ša)-dam* | *pu₂(lagabxu)-< pu₂(lagabxu)>-Kalam-ma til-<til>-li(še-ša)-da* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *pu₂* | *til-ed-a=Ø=am* | *pu₂~pu₂* | *Kalam=ak=Ø* | *til-ed-a=Ø=am* |
| hole | complete-IPFV-NMLZ=ABS=COP:3N.S | hole~RDPL | land=GEN=ABS | complete-IPFV-NMLZ=ABS=COP:3N.S |

"There are wells to be finished, many wells of the Land yet to be finished."
*ETCSL t.1.8.1.1:5, line 5 (Gilgamesh and Aga)*
https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/c1811.htm#line1

The **imperfective aspect** in Sumerian is frequently employed to denote **eternal truths**, **inviolable positions**, or **unchanging, sacred concepts**. This use underscores the **timeless** or **constant** nature of a statement, suggesting a foundational or **unquestionable** truth, as it is in (5):

For instance:

(5)  *E₂-an-na e₂-an-ta-e₁₁(lagar@g-du)-de₃*

| $e_2.an.na$ | $e_2$ | $an{=}ta$ | $e_{11}.d{-}ed{-}a$ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eanna | house | sky=ABL | go.down-IPFV-NMLZ |

"E-ana, the house lowered down from heaven."
*ETCSL 1.8.1.1, line 31 (Gilgamesh and Aga)*
https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/c1811.htm#line1

In (6), the imperfective aspect expresses the **eternal** and **sacred** nature of the temple's descent, highlighting its **permanent and unalterable** character.

(6)  *lu₂-še lugal-gu₁₀ i₃-me-a*

| $lu_2{=}še_3$ | $lugal{=}ĝu_{10}$ | $i_3{-}me{-}e$ |
|---|---|---|
| man=TERM | king=1SG.POSS | VP-be-3SG.A/S:IPFV |

"This man is my king."
*ETCSL 1.8.1.1, line 92 (Gilgamesh and Aga)*
https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/c1811.htm#line1

**Comparative study.** To broaden the scope of this investigation, this section offers a comparative examination of verbal aspect in Sumerian by analyzing two key corpora: **the Gudea inscriptions (Ur III period)** and **the Sumerian Gilgamesh corpus (Old Babylonian period).** While both corpora share core grammatical structures, they diverge significantly in their functional deployment of aspect, especially with regard to the imperfective domain.

The *Gudea* corpus (primarily from the "Cylinder A" and other votive inscriptions) exhibits a morphologically rich but functionally constrained use of the **present-future** (Präsens-Futur), which is perfective-imperfective for Jagersma (2010) and others. Falkenstein (1959) presents a complex yet tightly regulated aspectual system in *Gudea*, with the present-future formed through reduplication, extended roots, and affix chains.

Importantly, *-ed* forms do not occur across the full person-number paradigm; forms like *mu-na-ta-e₁₁-de* may represent **phonologically leveled variants** of *-ed*, where the final *-d* is lost or preserved only before suffixes (e.g., *-a*, *-am*). This morphological restriction aligns with the **ritual domain** of the texts: aspect is functionally embedded in **formulaic, causative, and jussive constructions**.

Falkenstein further identifies the rare pluperfect-like usage of *-ed* in preterite constructions, such as *šu-zi ma-ši-tumu-da* ("when you will have set your hand to it"), functioning similarly to a future perfect. The preterite itself lacks an explicit morphological marker for perfectivity; instead, **prefixal ordering** and **contextual cues** signal completed action. In the 1st person singular, the subject is typically morphologically zero-marked, absorbed by the surrounding vowels – a point Falkenstein treats in his analysis of plene writing (1959).

These features suggest that Gudea's aspectual system is **institutionally controlled** and **formally conservative**. The perfective/imperfective distinction is subsumed under ritual necessity: verbs describe actions to be performed or commissioned, not internal emotional or experiential states.

**Variant forms of the *-ed* suffix as *-e*** (Falkenstein, 1959)

In several cases, the *-ed* suffix appears as *-e*, particularly when **contractions** or **phonological leveling** affect the verbal chain. These instances still retain the **semantic force** of the **intransitive/passive present-future** extended form. *mu-na-ta-e₁₁-de₃* ← *mu-na-ta-e₁₁-d-ed* "it comes up to him from there" (Zyl A XVI

21, 24); *im-ma-ta-e₁₁-de₃* "they come up from there" (Żyl A IX 19) (3ʳᵈ PL, but shares morphology with singular due to formal overlap); *me-ni-da mu-na-da-dib-e* "he takes position with his divine power at his side" (Żyl B VI 23 and passim). Some examples are reduplicated *sipad-ĝu₁₀ ma-mu-zu ĝa₂ ga-mu-ra-bur₂* "My shepherd, I will explain your dream for you in every detail." (Gudea Cyl. A&B, 125, 5.12); Yet the others are **R(red)+ed** *ĝiš-hur e₂-a-na ma-ra-pad₃-pad₃-de₃* "so that he will reveal the design of his house to you in every detail." (Gudea Cyl. A&B 170, 7.6); *ma₂-gan me-luh-ha kur-bi-ta im-ma-ta-ed₃-de₃* "even Magan and Meluha will come down from their mountains." (Gudea Cyl. A&B 240, 9.19).

***Gilgamesh*: Literary Expansion and Semantic Fluidity.** In the Sumerian *Gilgamesh* corpus, by contrast, verbal aspect functions within a **narrative and dialogic framework**. Here, imperfective forms not only describe actions in progress but also:

Signal **dialogue onset**, especially using reduplicated verbs with ventive and imperfective inflection: *mu-un-ni-ib-gi₄-gi₄-e* "He answers him".

Express **future intent or goal**, often nominalized: *til-ed-a*, *gi₄-ed-a* "for the completion / return of..."

Establish **eternal truths** or unchanging facts: *e₁₁-ed-a* "the temple descended" (permanent status), *i₃-me-a* "he is (my king)".

Furthermore, reduplication in *Gilgamesh* appears to function **stylistically** and **semantically**:

Sometimes intensifying or emphasizing completed actions (*suh₃-suh₃*) in scenes of fading light or encroaching shadow.

At other times clearly indicating process, hesitation, or iterative effort (*gi₄-gi₄-e* "to return", *til-til-li-da* ""to live, to complete").

The **-ed suffix**, while not universal, is significantly more **productive and semantically flexible** in *Gilgamesh* than in *Gudea*. This contrasts sharply with Gudea, where *-ed* remains grammatically constrained and often fused with phonological environments, never fully paradigmatic. In *Gilgamesh*, by contrast, *-ed* is a **productive marker of dialogic and modal discourse**, signaling progressive, planned, or habitual actions even across **1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ person** constructions – rare or unattested in Gudea.

The suffix *-ed*, often analyzed as an imperfective/progressive marker, appears almost **exclusively in 3ʳᵈ person singular intransitive or passive** contexts, such as *ba-gi₄-gi₄-da* ("he who returns") and *ununutu-da* ("one who enters not").

**Comparative observations.** Taking all the above points into account, we can summarize the similarities and differences between the use of aspectual forms in the texts of *Gudea* and *Gilgamesh*.

| Feature | Gudea | Gilgamesh |
|---|---|---|
| **Use of *-ed*** | Rare, 3SG only, ritualized | Frequent, productive, modal and narrative functions |
| **Reduplication** | Morphophonological, stem-based | Semantic and stylistic: iteration, emphasis, progress |
| **Perfective strategy** | Fixed verbal chains, completion assumed by genre | Context-dependent, dynamic narrative effects |
| **Aspectual clarity** | High formal constraint | High interpretive flexibility |
| **Discourse domain** | Temple protocol, offerings | Dialogues, emotions, transformations |

**On person and imperfective marking.** A striking paradox emerges when comparing the distribution of -*ed* imperfective forms across grammatical persons in *Gudea* and *Gilgamesh* . The *Gudea* corpus features frequent use of **first-person royal voice**, yet it **completely lacks attested *-ed* forms in the first or second person**. By contrast, *Gilgamesh* contains far fewer such forms – confined mostly to direct speech – yet includes **a handful of attested *-ed* forms in 1st and 2nd person contexts**.

This asymmetry is best explained not by grammatical constraint but by **stylistic and functional differences**. In Gudea, the first-person voice is employed in **formal, ritual declarations**, where completed actions and divine commissions dominate – contexts where **perfective aspect prevails**. The verbal environment in such texts typically favors jussive, causative, or narrative forms over progressive or modal expressions. Conversely, the first- and second-person forms in Gilgamesh appear in **dialogue**, often charged with **emotion, desire, or hesitation** – precisely the conditions where **imperfective forms, including *-ed*, are semantically motivated**.

Thus, the difference lies not in person usage per se, but in **how person interacts with narrative function and aspectual need**. Gudea speaks often, but not progressively; Gilgamesh speaks rarely, but when he does, he speaks imperfectively.

(7)     *me-na-am$_3$(a-an) $^{giš}$gu-za gi-rin-ba i$_3$-tuš(lagabxaš)-u$_3$(igi-lagabxpa)-de$_3$-en bi$_2$-in(še/še-ni)-dug$_4$*

      *me.na-am*     *gu.za*    *gi.rin=be=a*            *i-tuš-ed-en*
      when-3N.S     chair     blossoming=3NH.POSS=LOC    VP-sit-IPFV-1SG.S
      *bi-n-dug$_4$-Ø*
      3N.OO-3SG.A-speak-3N.S/DO
      She said: "When will it be that I will sit on a splendid chair (made) from it?"
      ETCSL 1.8.1.4, lines 38-39 (Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld)
      https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/c1814.htm#lineA1

**Genre and epistemology of aspect.** These observations suggest a broader interpretive hypothesis: in *Gudea*, aspect serves the **epistemology of ritual precision**. The future is preordained, actions are prescribed, and verbal morphology reflects performative obligation.

In *Gilgamesh*, aspect encodes **narrative uncertainty and human experience**. Imperfectives express desire, grief, ambition, or transformation – a movement away from the divine fixity of Gudea's linguistic universe toward the poetic temporality of epic narration.

**Aspectual strategies across corpora.** This comparative study focusses on the role of the suffix *-ed* in marking the imperfective aspect in the Sumerian corpora of *Gudea* and *Gilgamesh* and shows a strong divergence in its frequency, function and person distribution. In the *Gudea*  inscriptions, *-ed* is rare and largely restricted to intransitive forms in the 3$^{rd}$ person singular, often occurring in fixed, formulaic contexts in connection with ritual actions. It is embedded in a morphologically conservative verbal system in which aspectual marking is subordinated to institutional and ceremonial conventions. In addition, *Gudea* exhibits phonologically modified or contracted *-ed* forms (e.g., *-e*), which are only productive to a limited extent and cannot be unambiguously attested for all individual verb forms.

In contrast, the *Gilgamesh* corpus shows far more dynamic use of *-ed*, where the suffix frequently appears not only on 3$^{rd}$ person verbs, but also on 1$^{st}$ and 2$^{nd}$ person forms. This flexibility reflects the demands of literary narrative and dialogic interaction, in which aspectual distinctions are used to express ongoing actions, habituality, intentionality and emotional states. In *Gilgamesh*, *-ed* appears at key points in

the narrative – particularly in the introduction of speech acts – and in modal and future-orientated constructions, where it often coincides with stem reduplication or imperfective (marû) inflection.

The suffix *-ed* thus functions as a central and productive marker of imperfectivity in *Gilgamesh*, characterizing the tense, modality and flow of discourse. Its restricted and morphologically conservative use in *Gudea* in contrast to its semantically rich and pragmatically diverse role in Gilgamesh illustrates a broader shift in the aspectual grammar of Sumerian from ritual rigidity to narrative fluidity.

| Strategy | Gudea | Gilgamesh | Person Distribution |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Reduplication* | Form-based | Semantic | All persons |
| *-ed Suffix* | Rare, 3SG | Common | 3SG (*Gudea*), all (*Gilgamesh*) |
| *Marû Inflection* | Yes | Yes | Broad |
| *Modal Prefix Chain* | Ritual use | Modal nuance | All persons |
| *Lexical Aktionsart* | Minor | Strong role | n/a |

## Conclusion

This study examined the imperfective aspect in Sumerian through a comparative analysis of two corpora: the *Gudea* inscriptions (Ur III) and the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Old Babylonian). While both employ similar morphological strategies – *marû* inflection, reduplication, and the suffix *-ed* – their functions diverge significantly due to differences in genre, discourse, and communicative aim.

In the *Gudea* corpus, aspect is governed by a rigid ritual framework. The *-ed* suffix appears almost exclusively in 3rd person singular forms, aligning with ceremonial precision and divine mandate. Reduplication often follows morphophonological patterns, reinforcing the formulaic structure of votive inscriptions and reflecting a ritual epistemology where actions are linguistically bounded and predetermined.

In contrast, *Gilgamesh* employs a more flexible and expressive use of imperfective aspect. The *-ed* suffix occurs in multiple persons and conveys modality, intentionality, or timeless truths. Reduplication signals iteration, dialogue, or emotional intensity, contributing to narrative dynamism. This variation aligns with the epic's literary objectives, emphasizing themes of human agency, uncertainty, and transformation.

The comparison reveals a broader cultural and linguistic dichotomy: Gudea's aspectual system is institutionally fixed, while *Gilgamesh*'s is narratively adaptive. These findings illustrate how Sumerian grammar could be shaped by genre and rhetorical function, offering insight into the interaction between linguistic form and textual worldview.

Future research might extend this analysis through computational methods or diachronic corpora, to assess whether these patterns reflect broader tendencies in Sumerian or are unique to specific genres. Ultimately, recognizing the aspectual contrasts between *Gudea* and *Gilgamesh* enhances our understanding of how ancient texts encoded ritual authority versus existential inquiry.

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მოცემული კვლევა ასახავს ზმნის ასპექტის ფუნქციონირებას შუმერულ ენაში გილგამეშიანის ტექსტის ანალიზის საფუძველზე. განსაკუთრებული ყურადღება უსრული ასპექტის ფორმებს ეთმობა. განხილულია ფორმალური მახასიათებლები (-ed სუფიქსი, რედუპლიკაცია, უსრული ასპექტის ზმნის ძირების ფორმა) და მათი სემანტიკა დიალოგურ, მოდალურ და ნარატიულ კონტექსტებში. შედარებითი ანალიზი გუდეას წარწერებთან აჩვენებს, რომ ასპექტური სის- ტემა მჭიდროდ უკავშირდება ჟანრსა და ტექსტურ თხრობას. გილგამეშიანში ასპექტი დინამი- კურია და გამოხატავს ემოციას, ჩანაფიქრსა და ცვლილებას, მაშინ როცა გუდეაში ის სტატიკურ რიტუალურ ფორმულებთანაა შეკრული. კვლევა ასპექტის სისტემას წარმოსახავს როგორც კულტურულად არეკლილ და ჟანრულად მორგებულ ლინგვისტურ კატეგორიას.

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