

COMPOUND TENSES II

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

Future-in-the-past forms in Turkish are compound tense structures used to express events that were located in the future relative to a past reference point.

These forms combine a future-oriented verb form with the past copula -DI, shifting the temporal viewpoint from present to past.

1. Function

Future-in-the-past structures are used to express:

- intentions or plans that existed in the past,
- future events viewed from a past moment,
- expectations or predictions held at a past time,
- actions that were going to happen but may not have occurred.

The structure encodes future meaning from a past perspective.

2. Forms

Future-in-the-past is formed by combining:

- a future-oriented verb form,
- the past copula -DI,
- personal endings.

The two structural patterns covered here are:

- -AcAK + -DI
- -(I)r + -DI

3. Morphology

The past copula derives from imek and appears as -DI, following vowel harmony and consonant assimilation.

Suffix shapes

- -DI → dı / di / du / dü
- -Tİ → tı / ti / tu / tü (after voiceless consonants)

Consonant Assimilation

When the past copula follows a voiceless consonant

(p, ç, t, k, f, s, ş, h), -DI surfaces as -Tİ.

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a. Future-in-the-Past (–AcAK + –DI)

Structure

Verb stem → –AcAK → (plural –IAr) → –DI → personal ending

Phonological rule

The suffix –AcAK ends in the voiceless consonant k.

For this reason, the past copula –DI automatically surfaces as –Tİ after –AcAK.

Important morphological note (k-softening)

In this compound tense, the final k of –AcAK does not soften.

Softening (k → ğ) occurs only when –AcAK is followed by a vowel-initial possessive suffix, not by a tense marker.

- gelecek → geleceğ-im (possessive)
- gelecek-ti-m (compound tense)

Plural Placement Rule (Critical)

In future-in-the-past forms, the plural marker –IAr is placed after –AcAK and before –DI.

- geleceklerdi ✓
- gelecektiler ✗ (not used)

The plural marker belongs to the future reference (–AcAK), while –DI marks past viewpoint over the entire construction.

Full paradigm (example base: gel-)

- gel-ecek-ti-m
- gel-ecek-ti-n
- gel-ecek-ti
- gel-ecek-ti-k
- gel-ecek-ti-niz
- gel-ecek-ler-di

This form expresses an event that was future-oriented from a past point.

b. Expected / Intended Future (–(I)r + –DI)

Structure

Verb stem → –(I)r → (plural –IAr) → –DI → personal ending

The –(I)r form expresses general expectation or likelihood, while –DI shifts the temporal viewpoint to the past.

Plural placement

As in –AcAK + –DI, the plural marker precedes –DI.

- yaparlar-di ✓
- yapardı-lar ✗

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Full paradigm (example base: yap-)

- yap-**ar**-dı-m
- yap-**ar**-dı-n
- yap-**ar**-dı
- yap-**ar**-dı-k
- yap-**ar**-dı-nız
- yap-**ar**-lar-dı

This form often expresses expectations, assumptions, or habitual outcomes viewed retrospectively.

4. Structural Guide (Step by Step)

Present-time future reference:

- Yarın geleceğim.
- (I will come tomorrow.)

Past-time future reference:

- Yarın gelecektim.
- (I was going to come tomorrow.)

Plural future in past:

- Yarın geleceklerdi.
- (They were going to come tomorrow.)

Expected outcome from a past viewpoint:

- Her şeyi hallede sanıyordum.
- (I thought everything would go fine.)

The compound form shifts the temporal anchor from present to past.

5. Syntax

Future-in-the-past forms function as finite predicates.

They occupy the verb position of the clause and carry full personal agreement.

Temporal adverbs often indicate the past reference point but are not structurally required.

6. Usage

-AcAK + -DI

Used to express:

- planned or intended actions in the past,
- future events viewed from a past moment,
- unrealized or interrupted plans.

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-(I)r + -DI

Used to express:

- expectations or assumptions held in the past,
- predictable or habitual outcomes viewed retrospectively.

Examples

- Dün seni arayacaktım ama unuttum.
• (I was going to call you yesterday, but I forgot.)
- Toplantıdan sonra konuşacaktık.
• (We were going to talk after the meeting.)
- Yarın geleceklerdi ama plan değişti.
• (They were going to come tomorrow, but the plan changed.)
- Her şey yolunda gider sanıyordu.
• (I thought everything would go fine.)

Notes

- The past copula -DI shifts a future-oriented form to a past reference point.
- After voiceless consonants, -DI surfaces as -TI due to consonant assimilation.
- Because -AcAK ends in k, the copula must appear as -TI.
- The final k of -AcAK does not soften before a tense marker.
- The plural marker -IAr appears before -DI, not after it.
- These forms describe temporal perspective, not factual outcome.
- Word order and clause structure remain unchanged.