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On the Relation between Inference and Epistemics in the Verb Paradigm of the Kartvelian Languages[1]

ABSTRACT

The verb paradigm of the Kartvelian languages enables us to draw interesting conclusions regarding the interrelationship between inference and epistemic modality. The paper analyzes the evidential perfect tenses common for all Kartvelian languages. The paper also focuses on certain organic imperfect evidential verb forms peculiar to the Megrelian and Svan languages. The issue of relation between inferential evidentiality and epistemics in the Kartvelian languages may be formulated as follows: a) Not every verb expressing inferential evidentiality is capable of expressing epistemic modality, b) All the verbs expressing epistemic modality are necessarily evidential.

Key words: Inference, Evidential, Epistemic modality, Kartvelian languages

One of the grammatical categories of the verb is evidentiality, which implies the speaker's reference to the source of information and is closely linked to epistemics, which, in its turn, marks the degree of reliability of information. In the Kartvelian languages (Georgian, Megrelian, Laz and Svan) evidentiality is developed as a morpho-syntactic category, expressed by means of special tenses and even specific morphemes In Svan and Megrelian), whereas epistemics only refers to modality in all the four languages.

In the literary Georgian, out of eleven tenses distributed among three series, two are evidential and common to all the Kartvelian languages. These are evidential perfect I and evidential perfect II (or, according to most widespread terms - resultative I and resultative II).

Note 1: we mention the evidential tenses based on the terms, logically and subsequently formulated within our project (in detail see: R. Kurdadze, M. Lomia, K. Margiani 2017).

Evidential Perfect I

Georgian: უწერია uçeria; Megrelian: უჭარუ(ნ) uçaru(n); Laz: უჭა(რ)უნ uça(r)un; Svan: ხoჯრა xojra–*'it has turned out that he/she has written it'.*

Evidential Perfect II

Georgian: ეწერა eçera; Megrelian: უჭარუდუ uçarudu; Laz: უჭა(რ)უტუ uça(r)uṭu; Svan: ხoჯრänַ *xojrän* – *'it turned out that he/she had written it'.*

It is well-known that, unlike the literary language, the non-written Kartvelian languages frequently express the semantic nuances by morphological means. **The same can be said regarding evidentiality: the non-written Kartvelian languages have developed additional tenses that express the given category.** In general, it should be mentioned that the development of the evidential semantics in perfect tenses is a widespread phenomenon, whereas imperfect evidential tenses are rare. However, in non-written Kartvelian languages both perfect and imperfect evidential forms are found:

Evidential perfect in Svan and Laz

Evidential perfect III

Svan: ხeჯრი xejri – *'he/she has probably written it'.*

Laz: In Vitsean-Arkabian and Atinian-Artashenian dialects: ჭარუ-დორენ çaru-doren, in Khofian-Chkhalian dialect: ჭარ-ელ-ერე-ნ *çar-el-ere-n*– *'that is to write, he/she has written it'.*

Evidential perfect IV

Svan: ხeჯრ̈ოლ xejrōl– *'he/she had probably written it'.*

Laz: In Vitsean-Arkabian and Atinian-Artashenian dialects: ჭარუ-დორტუნ çaru-doruṭun, in Khofian-Chkalian dialect: ჭარ-ელ-ერე-ტ-უ çar-el-ere-ṭ-u – *'that was to write, he/she had written it'.*

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Evidential imperfect I

Svan: ხჳრუნა xäjruna – '*it turned out that he/she was writing above something /it turned out that he/she was writing it for him/her*'.

Megrelian: ნოჭარუე(ნ) *noč̣arue(n)* – '*it has turned out that he/she is writing*'.

Note 2: *In the Arkabian texts recorded by J. Dumézil, M. Chukhua found resultative forms with prefix* **no**- *(ნო-ძიც-უ-დორენ no-ʒic-u-doren –'it turned out that he/she had been joking', ნო-წურ-უ-ე-ნ no-č̣ur-u-e-n –'it turned out that he/she had been teaching'....). Based on this, M. Chukhua argued that Megrelian and Laz show similar features also by using forms with prefix* **no**- *(Chukhua 2009:273). In our opinion, the given issue requires additional research and collection of the empirical material.*

Evidential imperfect II

Svan: ლჷმჯირ-ჳნ-[ლი] ləmijr-ün-[li]; Megrelian: ნოჭარუედუ noč̣aruedu; Laz: in Vitsean-Arkabian and Atinian-Artashenian dialects: ჭარუპტუ-დორენ č̣arup̣tu-doren, in Khofian-Chkalian

dialect: ჭარუპტ-ერენ č̣arup̣t-eren – '*it turned out that he/she had been writing hem/fer*'.

The evidential perfect forms common to all the Kartvelian languages, without any context or additional means, point to the external source of information. The same semantics is expressed by Laz evidential perfect III and evidential perfect IV, as well as the imperfect tenses found in Megrelian, Laz and Svan. For the above-mentioned verb forms, depending on the context, the source of information may be either verbality or inference.

Unlike the literary Georgian, the Svan language has evidential perfect forms *III and IV,* in which the source of information is only on the speaker's inference that is based on the background knowledge and experience of the latter and not on the direct trace of the action.

Therefore, it is far from "ideal knowledge" and is related to unlikelihood. These tenses are grammatically evidential, yet, epistemic in modality; Like the *I and II* perfect (resp. resultative), they are reinterpreted forms of the original static

verbs (inferential present/resp. imperfect future, imperfect conditional). Semantically, they are opposed to evidential perfect I and II by the component of unlikelihood-probability:

Evidential perfect III: ხეჯრი xejri– *'he/she has probably been writing or he/she has probably written',* cf. evidential perfect I (resp. past perfect, resultative I): ხჳჯრჱნა xäjrēna – *'it has turned out that he/she has written/has been writing'.*

Evidential perfect IV: ხეჯრɔლ xejrōl – '*he/she had probably written or he/she had been writing',* cf. evidential perfect II (resp. Past perfect, resultative II): ხოჯრჲნ xojrǎn– *'it turned out that he/she had written or had been writing'* ; In our opinion, **the existence of this specific epistemic perfect form in Svan proves the internal requirement of the language** – to develop perfect (resultative) forms corresponding to each major tense, and, since compared to the literary Georgian, Svan has more tenses even in the I series, it is natural that in the III series additional perfect forms with appropriate semantics have also been developed.

The following imperfect tenses are also of epistemic modality: inferential present (resp. imperfect future), conditional imperfect and conditional perfect in Svan and Megrelian.

Svan

It is due to epistemics that the inferential present is opposed to the ordinary (neutral) present, imperfect conditional is opposed to the im perfect and perfect conditional is opposed to permansive:

Inferential present: ჳჯრუნი äjruni – *'he/she is probably writing',* cf. neutral present: ჳჯრი äjri – *'he/she is writing'.*

Imperfect conditional: ჳჯრუნɔლ äjrunōl – *'he/she was probably writing', 'if he/she had been writing',* cf. imperfect: ჳჯრდა äjrda–*'he/she was writing'.*

Perfect conditional: აჯიჯრნა adijrna – *'he/she would probably write',* cf. permansive: ჩჳჯრდა čwäjrda – *'he/she would write'.*

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Megrelian

In the present and future groups of the I series, apart from tenses of organic formation, there are tenses of descriptive formation. Traditionally, they are termed as follows:

(1) Future imperfect - ჭარუნდას იწი/იწუაფუ *čarundas i'i/i'uapu – 'he/she must be writing' or 'probably he/she is writing'.*

Why these forms are termed as future tense, is an issue of separate discussion; **In fact, these tense forms describe the action in the present tense, with the semantics of probability-possibility.**

(2) Conditional imperfect - ჭარუნდუკო იწიდუ/იწუაფუდუ *čarunduko i'idu/i'uapudu – 'he/she may have been writing' or 'probably he/she was writing'* – ' this tense denotes the possibility-probability of the action in the past. The assumption of the speaker is based on his/her experience, generalized for the concrete case.

In Megrelian, future imperfect and conditional imperfect have their opposite forms with preverbs; Naturally, the preverb cannot replace the concept of modality which is common for all these forms; The forms with and without preverb are opposed to each other in aspect and tense.

In the imperfect evidential verbs of organic formation evidentiality is combined with epistemics, whereas their exact translation in to Georgian (or any other language) requires additional lexical means. This proves the opinion expressed in special literature: 'if the use of modal words is required in the process of translation, this means that in the source language (mostly in speech) the verb form expresses both inference and the modality of the incomplete truth (reliability) of the utterance' (Khrakovskiy 2007: 616-618).

Thus, in the Kartvelian verbs, evidentiality is a grammatical category, whereas epistemics is modality. Without additional modal means this modality is expressed only in the Svan and Megrelian languages.

As it was mentioned above, epistemics in the given forms is due to the fact that the source of information for the speaker is inference, which is based not on

the trace of the action, but on the background knowledge of the speaker about the action (event). Thus, the inferential information expressed by the evidential perfect tenses common to all Kartvelian languages is nearly as reliable as perceptive, as the speaker's reasoning is based on the direct trace. However, the inference expressed by imperfect verbs (with the exception of resultative tenses of the I series) bears the semantics of probability and doubt, because the conclusion based on the background knowledge is farther from the analyzed information than the conclusion based on the direct trace. In other words: the conclusion which is based on the direct trace is much more realistic than the one which is based on experience, background knowledge and generalization of external events.

Finally, the issue of relation between inferential evidentiality and epistemics in the Kartvelian languages may be formulated as follows:

a) **Not every verb expressing inferential evidentiality is capable of expressing epistemic modality.**

b) **All the verbs expressing epistemic modality are necessarily evidential.**

In the first case we mean evidential perfect *I and II* and evidential imperfect *III and IV* (in non-written languages), where, despite inferentiality, the degree of reliability of information is not evaluated and only the unseen actions are described. However, in modalized verb forms (inferential present, imperfect and perfect conditional, evidential perfect *III and IV)* the source of information is solely based on inference and the speaker's attitude to the information he provides contains the semantic component of suspicion.

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