

The Category of Evidentiality and Grammatical Time in the Kartvelian Languages

Ketevan Margiani & Ramaz Kurdadze

(Institute of the Georgian Language, Faculty of Humanities, Tbilisi State University)

In the languages in which verbal evidentiality is developed, this category is related to perfective forms, as in these languages grammaticalization of the semantics of the unseen is frequent (Willet 1988; Palmer 1986). The material of numerous languages has proved that in the process of historical development of the perfect meaning, the perfective (resultative) semantics is often overshadowed: „the next stage is the use of perfect forms for the expression of subsequent actions; the meaning of perfect and some past tense forms is restricted (narrowed), expressing evidential or non-evidential actions“ (Kozintseva 2007);

Perfect evidential tenses: *Evidential I* and *Evidential II* are found in all the four Kartvelian languages (Georgian, Megrelian, Laz and Svan), whereas imperfect tenses are found only in the non-written languages (Megrelian, Svan and Laz).

In general, perfective verb forms simultaneously express several meanings – the dynamics in the past and the static result of the action either in the past or in the present. The same is true for the Kartvelian languages: Evidential I simultaneously denotes the dynamic action in the past and its static result in the present, whereas Evidential II is a combination of two past meanings: distant and recent past.

The dual nature of the perfect forms—the interrelation between **the present and the past** _ can be explained by its pragmatic function. In the Kartvelian languages, this function is directly linked to the genesis of perfect forms: the perfect forms underwent the same development in all the four Kartvelian languages: from statics to dynamics, from result to evidentiality. The combination of tenses in the forms under analysis (past-present, distant and recent past) is directly linked to the initial verbs which were subject to reinterpretation: the static present yielded the combination of the past and present, whereas static aorist, which denotes past actions, yielded a combination of two stages of the past.

In the non-written Kartvelian languages, the evidential imperfect tenses are *Evidential III* and *Evidential IV*. By means of formal opposition between simple and continuous tenses, Megrelian and Svan reveal the tense difference in the past. In the Laz language, the form under analysis is represented as a single form based on the present continuous tense, whereas a continuous action in the past denotes an action without its opposing couple.

In Megrelian, *Evidential III* (evidential simple present):

- (1) *noxorue(n)* “it has turned out that he lives there” is semantically equivalent to *Evidential IV* (evidential past continuous):
- (2) *noxoruedu* “It turned out that he lived there”, “the tense meaning of a given form is defined by the second verb form in a sentence” (Kobalava 2001).

In the Svan language, the semantic difference between *Evidential III* and *Evidential IV* is conditioned solely by version—the first one denotes superessive or objective version, the second denotes neutral version. The sole function of both tenses is to denote an unseen action in the past continuous: *continuous*+ “*turme*” (*turme* = it turned out). However, there is great difference in their structure: the first one is an organic verb with its root/stem and grammatical affixes (object marker, version, evidentiality):

- (3) *xāiruna* – “it turned out that he was writing it above something”, whereas the second one is a descriptive form derived from the participle. An auxiliary verb takes part in its formation. This auxiliary verb is devoid of semantics, but its use is obligatory for the first and second persons (as it seems, nowadays it is used in order to avoid coincidence of forms). However, the auxiliary verb is not used in case of the third person (there is no need for differentiation, because, unlike the first and second person forms, it has no marker in the third person):
- (4) *ləm(ə)irune-xwi* “It turned out that I had been writing to her”,
(5) *ləm(ə)irune-xi* “It turned out that you had been writing to her”,
(6) *ləm(ə)irune-[li]* “It turned out that he had been writing to her”.

Unlike perfect evidential tenses, these forms represent only one tense—**evidential continuous past**, however, the auxiliary verb is given in the present form, even though, unlike Megrelian, this tense has only the meaning of evidential continuous both in the context and independently.

The semantics and partly the structure of verbs in Western Georgian dialects are similar to the imperfect evidential forms of the non-written Kartvelian languages:

- (7) *naçerav-var* “It turned out that I had been writing to her”,
(8) *naçerav-xar* “It turned out that you had been writing to her”,
(9) *naçerava* “It turned out that he had been writing to her”.

Taking into consideration the tendency of the Kartvelian languages towards grammatical expression of evidentiality, it can be assumed that the development of evidential semantics in the perfect forms and the formation of specific imperfect organic tenses is a common Kartvelian phenomenon conditioned by the inner tendency of the Kartvelian languages. The literary Georgian has escaped this process and used descriptive means to express the same meaning, whereas in the non-written Kartvelian languages and the dialects of the Georgian language have developed organic forms for the expression of evidential semantics.

The paper has been prepared within the framework of the project “The Category of Evidentiality in the Kartvelian Languages” (# 217300), financed by Shota Rustaveli National Scientific Foundation of Georgia.