Narratives and the Perfect in East Caucasian

Samira Verhees

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Introduction

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How to measure and systematically compare perfects and their meanings, in order to separate the more or less grammatical evidential markers from the rest?

Figure: Evidential perfects in East Caucasian
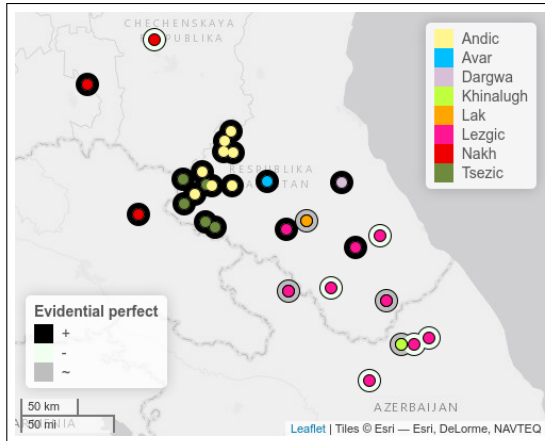
More maps here.

Meanings of Perfects

Two types of meanings

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(2) *iʃi -r   hab -saʔatɬːi -r   q'ani -r   q'ani -b -o   ekʷ'a*
     we -ERG this -hour   -ERG eat   -MSD eat -N -PFV.CVB AUX.PRS
     'We have [just] dined.' [Bagvalal (Andic)]

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Meanings of Perfects

Two types of meanings

- **Implicatures** - Alternating contextually conditioned meanings with varying frequency, e.g. indirect evidentiality (via inference), mirativity (unexpectedness) and epistemic modality (speaker commitment to truth).

(3) *ʔali -r   sĩː   kʼʷa -b -o   ekʼʷa*
     Ali -ERG bear kill -N -PFV.CVB AUX.PRS
     1. '(Apparently) Ali killed a bear.' - INFERENCE
     2. '(They say) Ali killed a bear.' - HEARSAY

[Bagvalal (Andic)]

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occasional implicature → conventional implicature
→ grammatical meaning

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→ There is a high level of subjectivity involved

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Problems

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- ▶ Surveys take forever to fill out and have a high risk of errors

Narrative use as a stable feature

+

- ► Indirect evidentiality is the perfect's only excuse to be very frequent in narratives
- ► Easily quantifiable: collect narratives - mark each main or finite verb form as P vs. not P - check correlation with evidential perspective (unwitnessed vs. witnessed)
- ► Spontaneous speech less sensitive to concentration / misunderstanding errors
- ► Any speaker can do it
- ► Solid feature, more or less independent of episodic evidential use; children acquire the narrative practice first and it seems harder to lose

Narrative use as a stable feature

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- Solid feature, more or less independent of episodic evidential use; so what are we measuring? Evidentiality or narrative habits?
- Can mirative or epistemic modal perfects make up the main line of a narrative?
- Competing narrative strategies exist (e.g. neutral past + reportative particle)
- Other forms may also be used in unwitnessed narratives
- Some languages with grammaticalized evidentiality use the perfect at the beginning of a story to set the mood, then switch (e.g. Tsezic)

Perfects in narrative texts

Take a bunch of glossed texts from descriptive grammars and mark each ~~main / finite~~ verb form P vs. not P, compare their distribution for texts about witnessed vs. unwitnessed events.

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alternative: Narratives about events not witnessed by the speaker contain significantly more verbs inflected for perfect. → the witnessed parameter plays a role in the choice of forms.

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Perfect indicates a lower degree of physical and psychological
involvement on the side of the speaker, which is licensed by situations
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Perfect indicates a lower degree of physical and psychological involvement on the side of the speaker, which is licensed by situations where the speaker was not present (unwitnessed) or where the situation took the speaker by surprise (mirative)
→ Witnessed 81 sentences (4 texts) | Unwitnessed 64 sentences (2 texts)
Total 145 sentences, 184 finite verbs

Dataset

Table: Dataset (EXAMPLE)

| sentence	lexical verb	trans	gloss	form
1	делать	(do)	V-IPF-PART=N=DI	participle
2	делать + быть	(do + be)	V-CONV + V.PF	pluperfect
comment	P	text	part	theme
quote	nonfinite	13. Корова		village anecdote
perspective	speaker	language	dialect	affiliation
indirect	[name]	Bagvalal	Kvanada	Andic
source	page	note		
Kibrik et al. (2001)	784	...		

P = P, not P, nonfinite (or NA)

Results

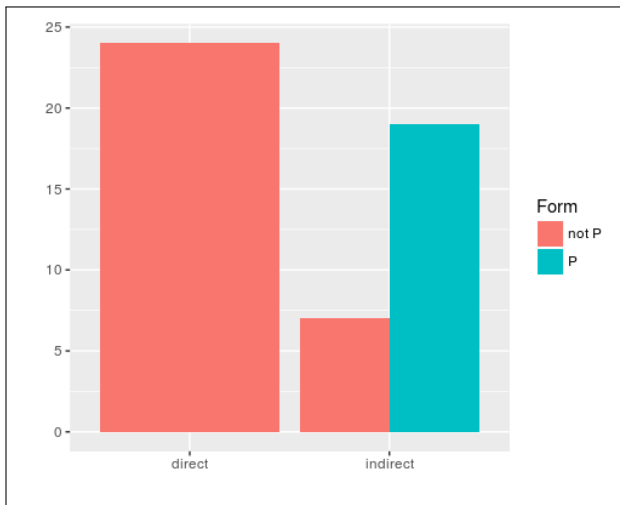Figure: Bagvalal (full sample)
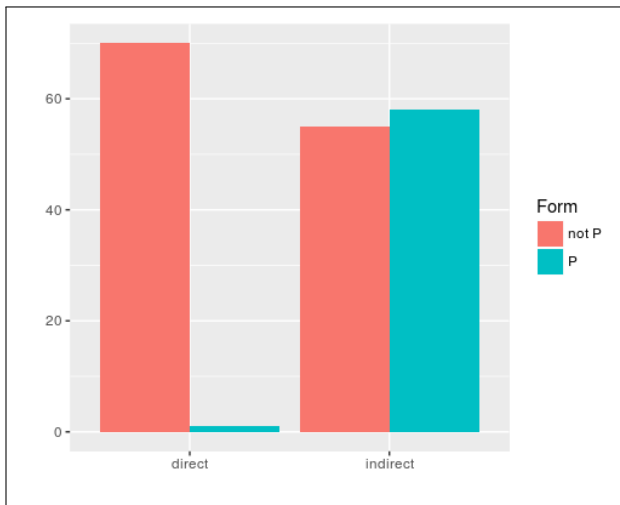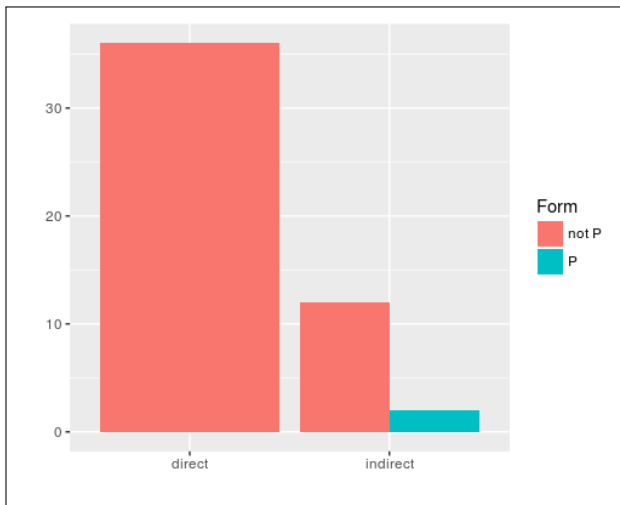
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Figure: Tsakhur (full sample)
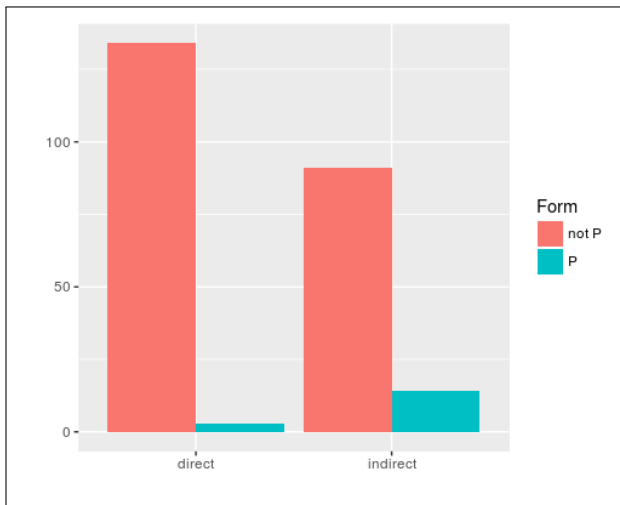
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Figure: Bagvalal (random 50)

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Figure: Tsakhur (random 50)

So far, so good..

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Bycatch

- ► Content of not P
  in Tsakhur more diverse and more present tense
- ► Use of nonfinite forms
- ► Aktionsart and lexical semantics of P verbs

Future data collection

Collect narratives from different speakers in a seeming transitional zone, i.e. personal anecdotes | retold anecdotes from others | local legends / fairy tales + mark the main verb form used in the narrative.

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Figure: Transitional zone (Agul, Tabasaran, Lezgian, Kaitag (Dargwa))
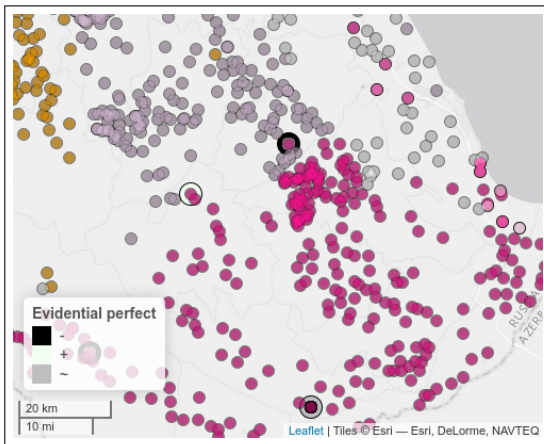
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Problem: *How to annotate texts in a new language quickly and efficiently?*

Баркала

за внимание