

# Narratives and the Perfect in East Caucasian

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# Introduction

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Variety of different meanings - indirect evidentiality is wide-spread (not absolute).

Meanings have varying grammatical status.

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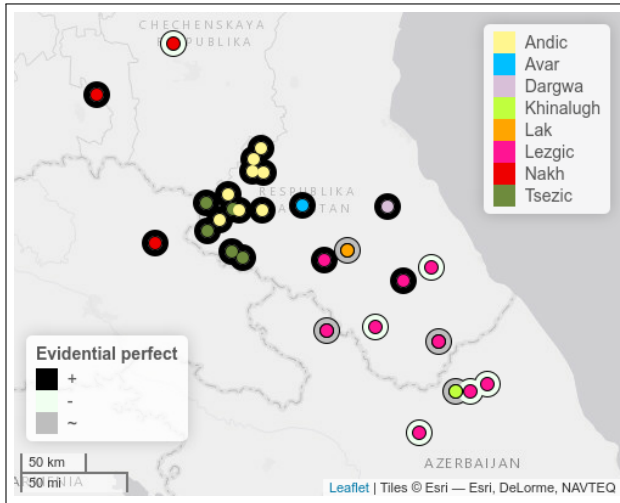
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Meanings have varying grammatical status.

*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

- ▶ **Current Relevance (CR)** - when a resultative construction expands its usage into new territory, it develops new meanings rooted in its resultative origin.<sup>1</sup>

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## Two types of meanings

- ▶ **Current Relevance (CR)** - when a resultative construction expands its usage into new territory, it develops new meanings rooted in its resultative origin.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ **Former implicatures** - indirect evidentiality (via inference), mirativity (unexpectedness) and epistemic modality (speaker commitment to truth).

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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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  - ▶ Target must be clear, but the researcher cannot be too literal
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- ▶ Researcher is prone to cherry-pick explanations and speakers
- ▶ 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 are 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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o: Speakers do not prefer to use perfects when they narrate events they did not witness personally.

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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→ Witnessed 51 sentences (3 texts) | Unwitnessed 92 sentences (3 texts)

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→ Witnessed 81 sentences (4 texts) | Unwitnessed 64 sentences (2 texts)

Total 145 sentences, 184 finite verbs

# Dataset

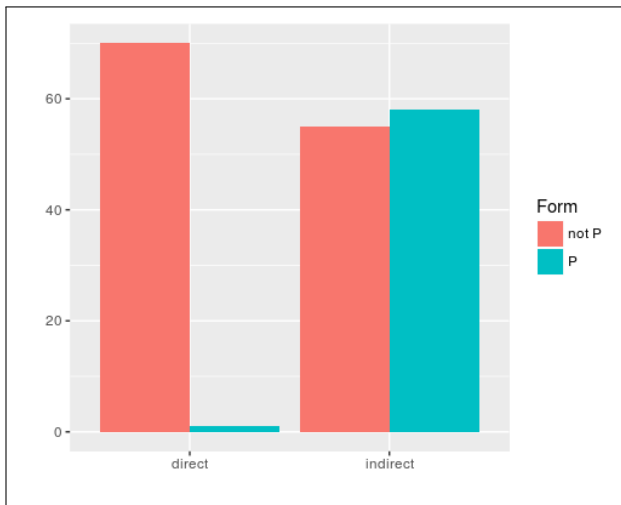
Table: Dataset (EXAMPLE)

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. Копова		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)

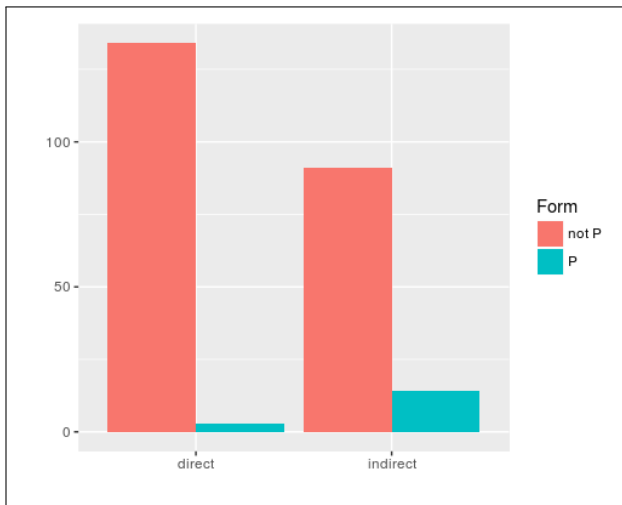
# Results

Figure: Bagvalal (full sample)



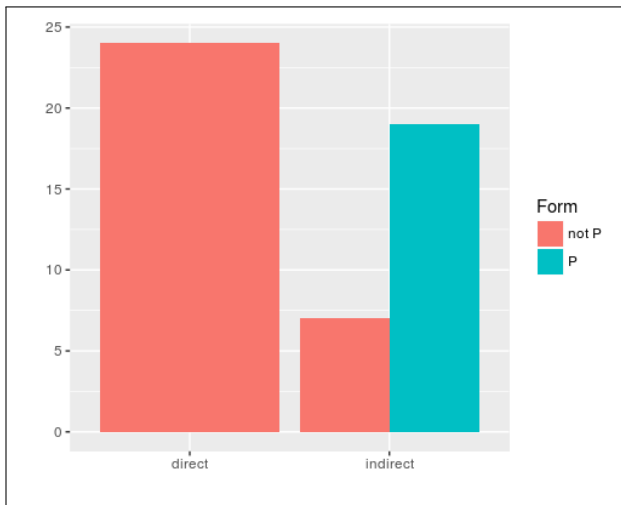
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Figure: Tsakhur (full sample)



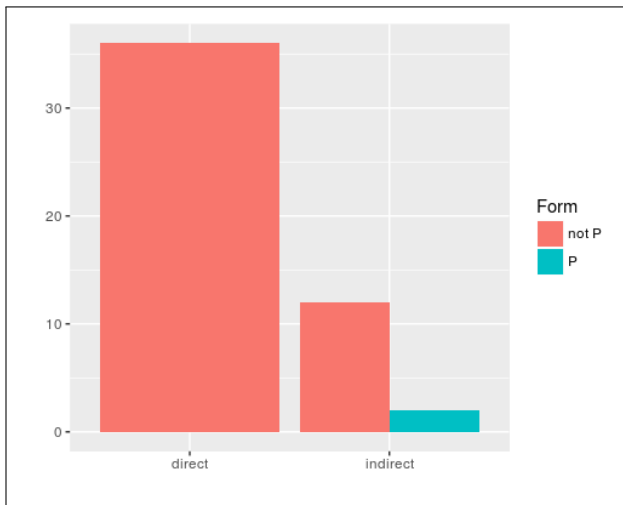
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Figure: Bagvalal (random 50)



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Figure: Tsakhur (random 50)



So far, so good..



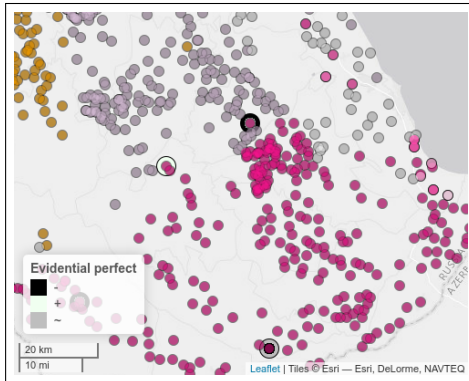
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## Bycatch

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

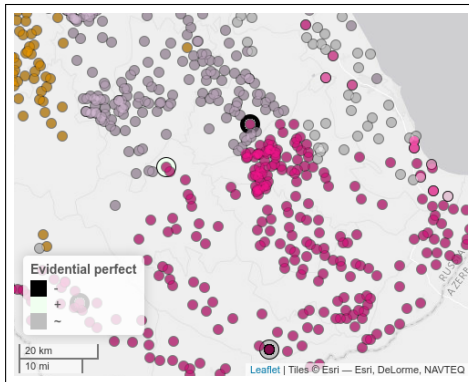
# Future data collection

**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