

Evidentiality in Udmurt

Results of a linguistic fieldwork

In the Udmurt language (Permic, Finno-Ugric, Uralic) grammatical evidential markers overlap with tense markers. The use of the so-called 2nd past tense forms in Udmurt can denote evidential meanings (1).

- (1) Kolja tolon lykt-em.
kolja tomorrow arrive-PST2.3SG
Kolja arrived tomorrow (but I did not see it).

(Siegl 2004: 29)

We can say that this is a small system (cf. Aikhenvald 2005) because in Udmurt there is only one marker for this function. However, the usage of this marker is diversified. This 2nd past tense marker historically derived from a participle originally could serve as a marker of the perfect aspect, when the speaker focuses on the result of a former action affecting the time of the utterance. The 2nd past tense verbal suffixes have other meanings as well, these are evidentiality (and its subcategories like mirativity) and inference (cf. Siegl 2004). The exact meaning of the expression can be determined only in virtue of the context or the whole text. In addition evidentiality in Udmurt can be expressed by lexical elements (2) and analytic forms (3) as well.

- (1) Ton, pe, kyrža-ny usto bygati-šk-od.
you, i_.is_said, sing-INF masterly can-PRS-2SG
It is said that you can sing masterly.

(Kozmács 2002: 332)

- (2) so ušt-em vylem.
he/she open-PST2.3SG be.PST2
He/she has opened it (but I did not see that).

(Nazarova 2014: 236)

However, grammatical evidentiality in Uralic languages is not an inherited feature from Proto-Uralic or Proto-Finno-Ugric, these languages share their properties in their evidentiality systems, not only in the types of encoding but in terms of evidential values as well (cf. Skribnik – Kehayov 2018).

The present paper aims at discussing the result of a linguistic fieldwork took place in Udmurtia. Methodologically the research consists of two parts. The first part is a picture-based task in the course of that the speaker has to describe the pictures and their possible history as well, in which the scene and people are unknown for the speaker but concentrated on representing the categories of evidentiality. The second task focuses on the speakers personal experiences and memories within the confines of a conversation.

The main questions of the research are: 1. Is there any difference between the use of evidentiality from dialectal aspect? 2. Is there any difference in the usage of evidentiality whether the speakers talk about things, that are already known or familiar to them (speaking task), and about things, that include new informations (picture-based task). 3. Can be found out anything about the chronology in the changing of the usage of the 2nd past tense; at present what kind of functions it has, and how these functions have changed in the last decades or (if it is possible) in the last century.

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