

Evidentiality and mirativity in Northern Akhvakh (Nakh-Daghestanian, Andic)

The development of grammaticalized means of expression of evidentiality and mirativity is an areal feature of the languages spoken in and around the Caucasus. Northern Akhvakh shows an interesting mixture of phenomena very common in the area and of more specific phenomena.

In addition to the perfect (an analytic tense which by itself carries no evidentiality/mirativity implication, but is compatible with contexts implying indirect knowledge), Northern Akhvakh has four synthetic verb forms available to encode past events in narrative contexts:

PF₁: HPL *-iri*, other classes *-ari*

PF₂: HPL *-idi*, other classes *-ada(CL)* (CL = class agreement marker)

PF₃: *-CL-wudi*

PF₄: *-CL-wa*

These four forms are equivalent with respect to tense and aspect, but differ in their evidentiality implications:

- PF₁ implies that the speaker has a direct knowledge of the events (s)he is reporting.
- PF₂ encodes an extreme case of direct knowledge, since it implies that the speaker participated actively in the event (s)he is reporting; this form is used only with transitive verbs and intransitive verbs assigning a relatively active role to their S argument, and it selects 1st person S/A arguments in declarative clauses and 2nd person S/A arguments in questions (this cross-linguistically rare pattern is known in the literature as ‘conjunct/disjunct system’).
- PF₃ encodes indirect knowledge; this is the standard tense in fiction narratives; it is also attested with an inferential meaning, but this use is not common (the perfect, which by itself has no evidentiality implication, is in Northern Akhvakh the verb form most commonly found in inferential contexts).
- PF₄ has two uses that seem difficult to reduce to a common denominator. On the one hand, this form occurs in questions, in which it expresses surprise; in this use, it is particular common in *why*-questions. On the other hand, it occurs in narration, implying a particular kind of attitude of the speaker: (s)he has not necessarily a direct knowledge of the events (s)he reports, but imposes him/herself as an authority that the hearer must trust, even if (s)he is surprised by what (s)he is being told (which implies for example that this form cannot be used by children in interactions with adults).