

THE SYNTAX OF EVIDENTIALS IN AZERI, BULGARIAN, AND PERSIAN*

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EVIDENTIALITY is a linguistic category expressing the source of evidence that the speaker has for the proposition, with a basic distinction between DIRECT and INDIRECT evidence, with the option of further subdivisions for each (Aikhenvald and Dixon (2003); Aikhenvald (2004); Willett (1988); Chafe and Nichols (1986) a.o.). In this paper, we discuss the syntactic structure of evidential constructions in Azeri (Turkic), Bulgarian (Slavic), and Persian (Iranian). What unites these three languages from three different language families is that they all express evidentiality within the Temporal-aspectual-modal system. The evidential marking is parasiting on TAM in two ways: (1) morphologically, through a morpheme used also to express Present perfect tense, which has been dubbed PERFECT OF EVIDENTIALITY by Izvorski (1997); and (2) semantically, because tense and evidentiality in these languages are inseparable, which has caused previous works to call the tenses in Bulgarian ‘definite’ and ‘indefinite past’, Friedman (1986), or, in Persian and Azeri, ‘witnessed’ and ‘non-witnessed past’, as in Kasravi, via Windfuhr (1982), or ‘past reportive’, or ‘direct past’ and ‘inferential past’ (ibid.).

We show that syntactically, evidentials can be regarded as a separate projection and are not always ambiguous with a perfect reading. We propose that this functional head is high, above TP, while ‘real’ perfects are in AspP, lower than TP. This head interacts with tense realization on T and this can help account for the two parallel types of past paradigms that grammarians report.

The paper is organized as follows: Section §1 introduces the puzzle, §2 provides the data that supports our proposal for two separate heads, §3 is the proposal and §4 concludes the paper.

1. The puzzle: Perfects vs Evidentials

In Azeri, Persian, and Bulgarian, evidentiality is linked with tense and aspect - so-called PERFECT OF EVIDENTIALITY in Izvorski (1997). For Izvorski (for Turkish and Bulgarian), the Present Perfect tense is ambiguous between Present Perfect reading and indirect evidential Aorist reading.

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- (1) a. Gel-**miş**-im. [Turkish]
 come-**PartP**-1SG
 b. Az s̄am dořa-**l**. [Bulgarian]
 I be.PRES.1SG come-**PartP**

Meaning 1: ‘I have come.’ [PRESENT PERFECT]

Meaning 2: ‘Apparently, I came.’ [PERFECT OF EVIDENTIALITY]

Example (1) in Izvorski (1997)

This putative ambiguity holds also for Persian and Azeri:

- (2) a. ḡal-**miş**-əm [Azeri]
 come-PP-1SG
 b. umæd-**e**-əm [Persian]
 come-**PartP**-1SG

Meaning 1: ‘I have come.’ [PRESENT PERFECT]

Meaning 2: ‘Apparently, I came.’ [PERFECT OF EVIDENTIALITY]

There are [at least] two possible ways to go about this fact: (1) lexical ambiguity: the Present Perfect morpheme (past participle) is ambiguous between marking perfect aspect and indirect evidence, Izvorski (1997); (2) two separate forms with distinct morpho-syntactic characteristics. We choose the latter route. The arguments are laid out in the next section.

2. Evidence for two separate heads

We discuss the data by starting with pluperfects because they showcase that the evidential morpheme is separate from the aspectual morpheme because they can co-occur. Then we move on to the superficially ambiguous synthetic past tenses to show how the proposed model can generate them.

2.1 Pluperfects

The ambiguity shown above (we get back to it later) holds only in synthetic tenses and morphologically non-past tenses. However, in all analytic morphologically past tenses, there is a morphological distinction between direct and indirect, Simeonova (2014b). For the Pluperfect, it is summarized as follows:¹

- **Direct Pluperfect (3):** past tense marker + past active participle of main verb²

¹The analytic tenses are: Pluperfect, Future in the past, and Future Perfect in the past. We focus on the Pluperfect here, noting that the reasoning is analogous for the others.

²Passive participles are morphologically different from active ones in Azeri, Bulgarian, and Persian, and can participate in direct and indirect passive constructions without making evidential contribution (it’s coming from the tense of the auxiliary).

- **Indirect Pluperfect (4):** Present tense + past active participle of auxiliary verb + past participle of main verb

Examples with each of the two forms, (3) for ‘direct’ and (4), show the close analogy among the three languages:

(3) **Direct Pluperfects:**

- Tehran *ræft-e* **bud** Ø. [Persian]
Tehran go.PAST.**PartP** be.PAST 3SG
- Tehran-a *get-miş-di* Ø. [Azeri]
Tehran-DAT go-**PartP**-PAST 3SG
- Vlakat **beshe** *zamina-l* za Teheran. [Bulgarian]
train.def be.**PAST**.3SG leave.PRF-**PartP** for Teheran
‘He **had gone** to Tehran.’ [direct/#indirect]

(4) **Indirect Pluperfects:**

- Tehran *ræft-e* *bud-e* (æst) [Persian]
Tehran go.PAST.**PartP** be.**PartP** (be.PRES.3SG)
- Tehran-a *get-miş-i-miş* Ø. [Azeri]
Tehran-DAT go-**PartP**-EP-**PartP** 3SG
- Vlakat **e** **bil** *zamina-l* za Teheran. [Bulgarian]
train.def **be**.Pres.3SG be.PartP leave.PRF-**PartP** for Tehran
‘The train **had gone** to Tehran.’ [#direct/indirect]

None of these examples are ambiguous. They differ neither in temporal, nor in aspectual orientation.³ The only difference between them is the evidential meaning: **direct** in (3) (for example, the Speaker was at the train station), and **indirect** in (4) (for example, the Speaker was not at the station but was told by someone else). In this sense, there is no evidentially-neutral past form, as pointed out for Bulgarian by Simeonova (2014a), Nitsolova (2008), Kutsarov (1994). This is also shown to be the case for other languages with evidentials in TAM, such as Turkish in Şener (2011), Tsez (Caucasian-Tsezic) in Khalilova (2011) and Chechen (Nakh-Daghestanian) and Molochieva (2007).

2.2 Preterites and non-past

Now we turn back to the original data puzzle with the superficial ambiguity between Aorist and Present Perfect. We show that the evidential reading is determined not by aspect but by morphological past tense, Simeonova (2014a). In the non-past tenses (Present, Present

³Thus, we hold against the concept of ‘distant past’, Meshkato-Dini (2005).

Perfect), the forms are **underspecified for evidentiality**, Simeonova (2014b); Zareikar (2015a).

In (1)-(2), we showed only the indirect version of Aorist (which looks like a present perfect). Now we compare direct and indirect Aorist. The morphological Aorist has **only** direct evidential meaning (5). The forms in (6) have the same temporal orientation as Aorist, but evidentially indirect.

A ‘true’ Present Perfect reading is not available because the temporal reference (‘at 3pm’) rules it out.

(5) **Direct Aorist:**

- a. Qatar saate 3 az istgah **raft-Ø**. [Persian]
train hour 3 from station leave.PAST-3SG
- b. Qatar sahat 3-de get-**di-Ø**. [Azeri]
train hour 3-DAT leave-PAST-3SG
- c. Vlakat **zamina** v tri chasa. [Bulgarian]
train.def leave.AOR.3SG in three hours
‘The train **left** the station at 3pm.’ [**direct/#indirect** Aorist]

(6) **Indirect Aorist:**

- a. Qatar saate 3 az istgah raft-**e** (æst). [Persian]
train hour 3 from station leave.PAST-**PartP** (be.PRES.3SG)
- b. Qatar sahat 3-de get-**miş**. [Azeri]
train hour 3-DAT leave-PartP-3SG
- c. Vlakat e zamina-**l** v tri chasa. [Bulgarian]
train.def be.PRES.3SG leave.PRF-**PartP** in three hours
‘The train left the station at 3pm.’ [**#direct/indirect** Aorist, **#Present Perfect**]

Now we turn to Present Perfect.⁴ Contrary to the obligatoriness of evidential marking in the past, there is no distinction between direct and indirect in the case of the Present perfect, also shown for Azeri in Zareikar (2015a):

(7) **Present perfect:**

- a. Kat Still-Alice-e gör-**müş** [Azeri]
Kat Still-Alice-ACC see.PRES-**PartP**-3SG
- b. Kat Still-Alice-ro did-**e** (æst) [Persian]
Kat Still-Alice-ACC see.PAST-**PartP** (be.PRES.3SG)
- c. Kat e gleda-**l-a** Still-Alice. [Bulgarian]
Kat be.PRES.3SG see.**PartP**-fem Still-Alice
‘Kat has seen Still Alice’. [**Direct/Indirect** Present Perfect]

⁴The case for Present tense is analogous, Simeonova (2014b).

These data show that, in these three languages, evidentiality is strongly related to tense, not aspect. Evidentiality is manifested in the past tense, where a morphological past means direct, and replacing it with a participle and a copula in a non-past tense gives an indirect past tense meaning. Non-past tenses are neutral with respect to evidential value (already suggested by Izvorski (1997) by translating them as ‘just’ Present Perfect).

To sum up, based on data with Pluperfects (3)-(4), we showed that there are grounds to posit that the evidential morpheme is separate from the perfect morpheme. Based on comparison with non-past tenses, we showed that evidentiality in our three languages is conditioned by Tense. The next section shows the syntactic positions for the two morphemes.

3. Analysis

We propose that the two participles occupy two different syntactic positions: Perfect is in AspP lower in the structure and evidential is part of the extended CP skeleton. This is illustrated in (8).

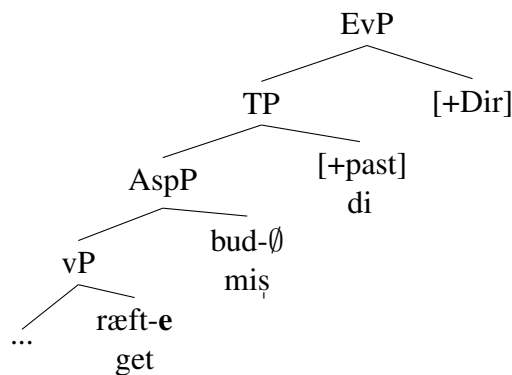
(8) EvP > TP > AspP > vP

This proposal rules out the syntactic ambiguity of the constituent in the Present Perfect examples (1-b), (2-b). It allows the lower positioned morpheme to manifest aspect and the structurally higher one to represent evidentiality, Zareikar (2015b).

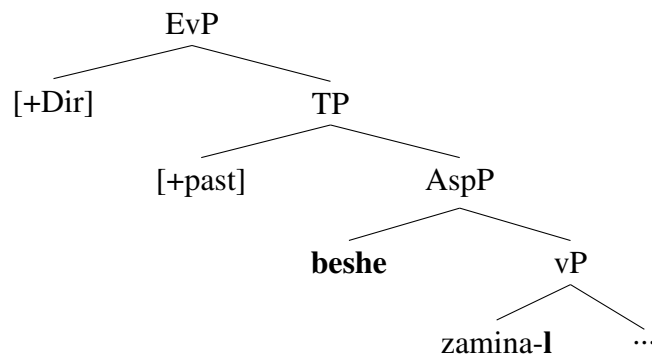
This is more clearly illustrated for Pluperfect. In these trees, T gets [+Tense] in cases where there is a direct Pluperfect reading, shown in (9).

(9) Trees for **direct Pluperfect** as in (3):

a. In Persian, Azeri:



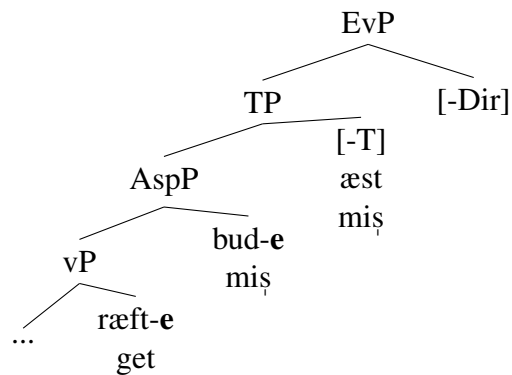
b. in Bulgarian:



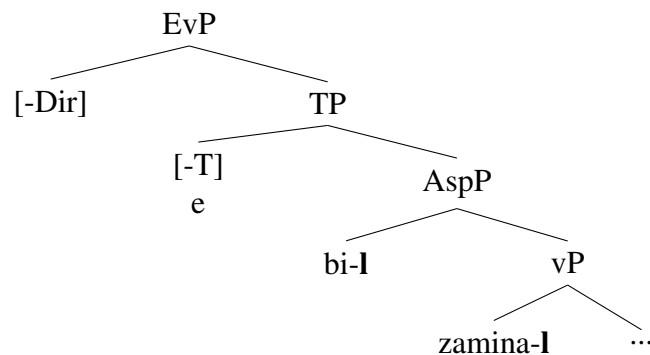
In cases with an indirect reading, on the other hand, the T is [-Tense], as in (10).

(10) Trees for **indirect pluperfect** as in example (4):

a. In Persian, Azeri:



b. In Bulgarian:



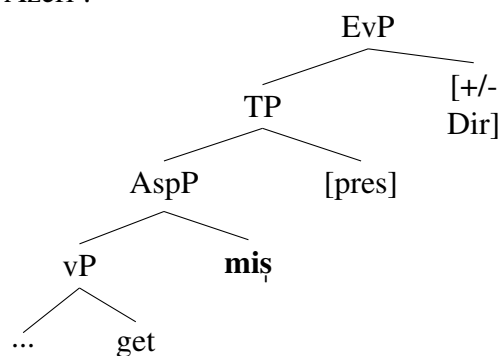
The idea for our analysis comes from Chomsky (2007) where he suggests that T has Tense features if and only if it is selected by C. Accepting this, Chomsky presents two possibilities for the projection of Tense: (1) tense is a property of C and is inherited by T; (2) tense is a property of T but receives residual interpretations unless it is selected by C. In other words, Chomsky (2007) claims that T has basic properties of uninterpretable features and its φ -features are determined by its context. The unvalued T enters the derivation and

it gets valued only if it is selected by C.

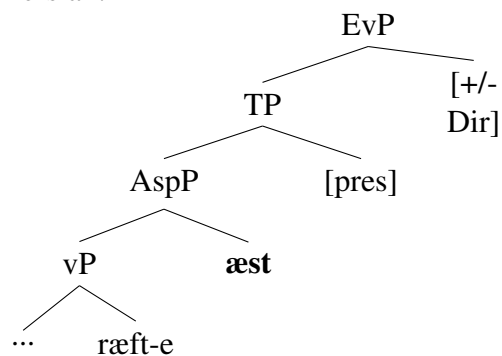
Here is how this idea is applied to our proposal of a separate evidential projection. TP determines the Tense when it is selected by EV, Chomsky (2007); Richards (2007) (see Bobaljik and Wurmbrand (2014) for a similar discussion on interrogatives). In (9), the direct Pluperfect form, only the Tense feature on T is selected by the evidential operator. In the indirect case, in (10), [-Dir] cannot select Tense on TP and T cannot get interpreted for its tense features. The distinction in the evidential value is manifested in the distinction of the valued features in T. This is represented structurally as follows:

(11) Trees for **present perfect**, as in (7):

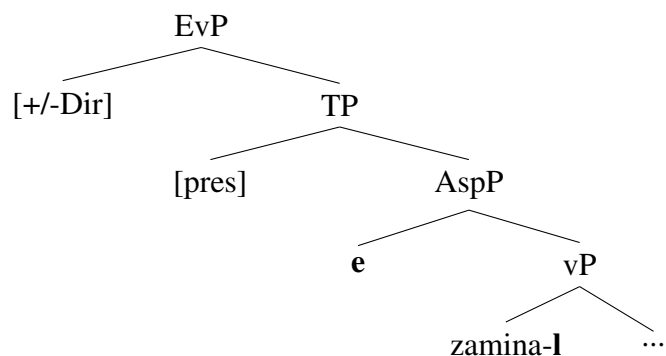
a. In Azeri :



b. In Persian:



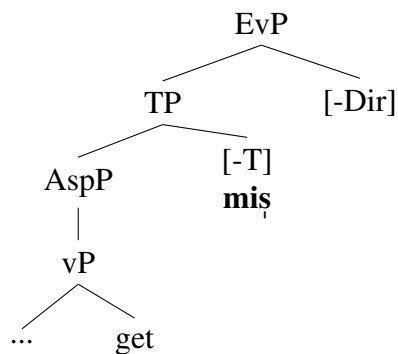
c. In Bulgarian:



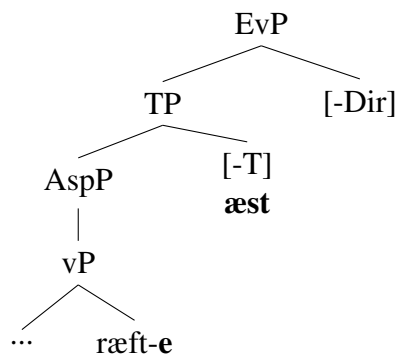
The original puzzle of the ambiguity between present perfect and indirect Aorist shown in (1-b), (2) is explained under our proposal by having different valuations of EvP and TP. Consequently, the respective morpheme is in two different positions: low, in AspP, in the Present perfect reading, as shown in (11), and high in the indirect reading (12).

(12) Trees for **indirect aorist**, as in (6):

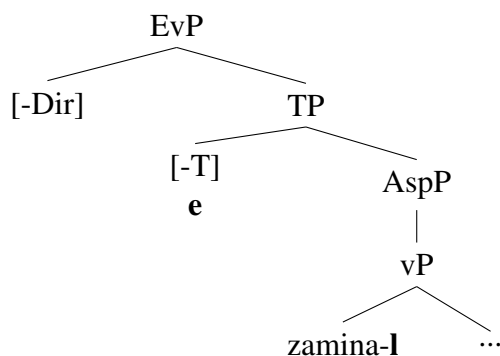
a. In Azeri :



b. In Persian:



c. In Bulgarian:



4. Conclusion and implications

In this paper, we showed that a common syntactic account of evidentiality is possible in Azeri, Bulgarian, and Persian, where evidentiality interacts with tense and aspect. We proposed that evidential morpheme is separate from the perfect morpheme and that the evidential is dependent on tense, not aspect.

Looking further, the analysis could be extendable to other languages where the phenomenon is manifested in a similar way, like Tsez, Khalilova (2011), Uzbek, Straughn (2011), Kurmanji, Bulut (2000), Estonian, Campbell (1991), and Latvian, Gronemeyer (1997), a.o.

Furthermore, our analysis could be applicable also for languages without ‘Perfect of evidentiality’, as it does not count on the perfect morphology as the source of evidentiality, but rather takes it as a morphological manifestation of the structural specification of EvP.

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