

The syntax of evidentials in Azeri, Bulgarian, and Persian

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1 Road map

- We discuss the syntactic structure of evidential constructions in Azeri, Bulgarian, and Persian;
- We show that evidentials can be regarded as a separate projection and are not always ambiguous with a perfect reading;
- We argue that this functional head is high, above TP, while Perfects are in AspP, lower than TP

2 Perfects vs Evidentials

In Azeri, Persian and Bulgarian, evidentiality is linked with tense and aspect - so-called PERFECT OF EVIDENTIALITY (Izvorski, 1997). For Izvorski (for Turkish and Bulgarian), the present perfect tense is ambiguous between evidential and perfect reading. The perfect reading is not available in cases where the morpheme is marking evidentiality. This is represented by a single morpheme:

(1) a. Gel-**miş**-im. [Turkish]
come-**PartP**-1SG

b. Az sām doša-**l**. [Bulgarian]
I be.PRES.1SG come-**PartP**

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

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

Adapted from (Izvorski, 1997, ex. (1))

We show that this apparent ambiguity holds also for Persian and Azeri:

(2) a. gəl-**miş**-əm [Azeri]
come-PERF-1SG

3 Analysis

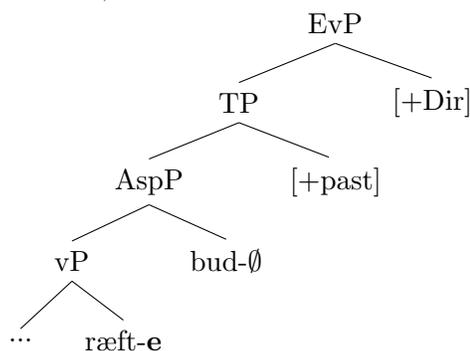
We propose that the two participles occupy two different syntactic positions: evidential is in CP and perfect is in AspP.

(5) EV > TP > Asp > vP

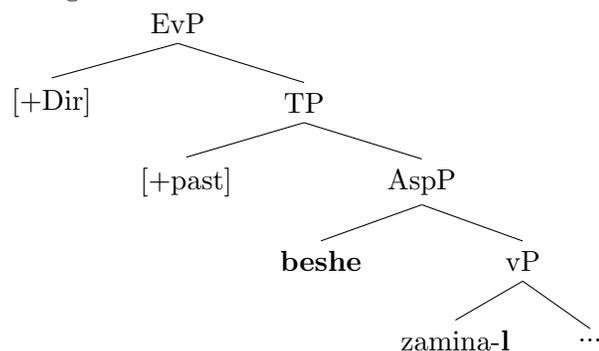
This proposal rules out the syntactic ambiguity of the constituent in the present perfect examples (1-b), (2-b), which is even more clearly shown in pluperfect.

(6) Trees for **direct pluperfect** as in (3):

a. In Persian, Azeri:

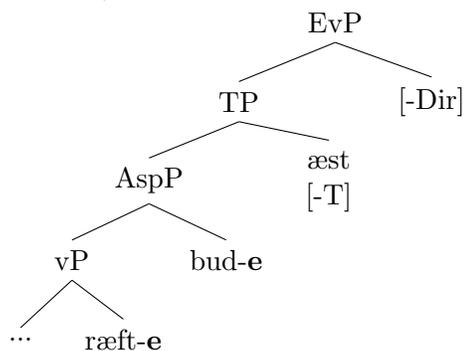


b. in Bulgarian:

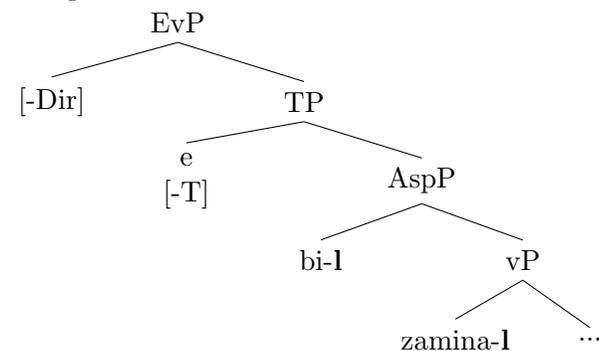


(7) Trees for **indirect pluperfect** as in (4):

a. In Persian, Azeri:



b. in Bulgarian:



In these trees, T gets [+Tense] in cases where there is a direct pluperfect reading, but in cases with indirect reading the T is [-Tense]. We propose that the lower participle marks aspect where the higher one marks evidentiality (Zareikar, 2015).

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:

- Tense is a property of C and is inherited by T;
- Tense is a property of T but receives residual interpretations unless it is selected by C

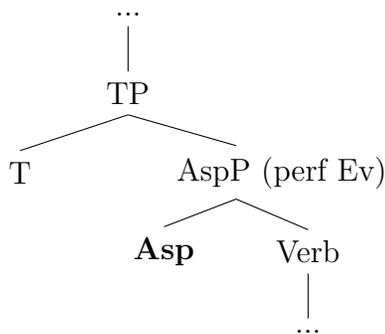
The advantage of the latter option is that it leaves some features in the lexicon.

Considering that the examples above have a projection of EvP, it is the TP that determines the Tense of the structure when it is selected by EV (Chomsky, 2007; Richards, 2007). In (6), where we have direct pluperfect reading, only the Tense feature on T is selected by the evidential operator. However, in the indirect case, (7), T cannot get interpreted for its tense features. We propose that in such cases the EV has more features than the former case. So, the distinction in the evidential value is manifested in the distinction of the valued features in T. The indirect evidential feature on EvP does not select the Tense feature on T where the direct evidence does.

4 Relation with previous analyses

This proposal differs from some previous syntactic views on Evidentials, including Cinque (2001) on Turkish and, specifically on Bulgarian, Varley (2014), who argue for separate syntactic positions for each evidential. Varley (2014) specifically puts the one discussed above (1-b) in the AspP projection below TP:

(8)



(Varley, 2014, p. 44, (1))

This proposal, which seems inspired from Izvorski's (1997) semantic account of ambiguity that we discussed above (PERFECT OF EVIDENTIALITY) is capable of capturing the ambiguity of the Present perfect, as in (1) and (2), because when T is valued [-Past] we will not see any difference. But it makes the wrong predictions about the Past forms, both pluperfect and aorist:

- In Aorist, we would not expect to have AspP filled with perfect aspectual element and get no perfect reading.
- Note that the indirect versions of the imperfect tense is also formed with a participial morpheme (example from Persian, analogous for Azeri and Bulgarian):

- (9) a. **Direct imperfect:**
 mi-xord- \emptyset
 PROG-eat-3SG
 ‘He was eating.’
- b. **Indirect imperfect:**
 mi-xord-e- \emptyset
 PROG-eat-PP-3SG
 ‘He was eating.’

- In Past perfect, Varley’s (2014) proposal cannot distinguish between the Direct and Indirect pluperfect, because for her evidentiality is marked in AspP (i.e. below TP), while we posit that it is coming from above TP.
- Having separate projections for various evidential meanings fails to capture the semantic contribution of evidentiality. Furthermore, it predicts that different types of evidentials will be able to co-occur. However, different readings are in complementary distribution (cannot be Direct and Indirect simultaneously) which is why we propose one evidential OP with different values.

We want to capture cross-linguistic similarities by positing one functional projection position for Persian, Azeri, Bulgarian, and one Evidential operator with different values.

5 Conclusion and implications

We showed that a unified syntactic account of evidentiality is possible in Azeri, Bulgarian, and Persian, where evidentiality interacts with tense and aspect.¹

This analysis is extendable to other languages where the phenomenon is manifested in a similar way, like Tsez (Khalilova, 2011), Uzbek (Straughn, 2011), Kurmanji (Bulut, 2000). Furthermore, our analysis can be applied 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 manifestation of the structural specification of EvP.

Any comments/suggestions welcome.

THANK YOU!

Gita (Azeri, Persian) & Vesela (Bulgarian)

¹Our proposal is also different from another temporal account of evidentials, Smirnova (2013), who posits that the temporal distinctions are in terms of the evidence acquisition time (EAT) (past, where the acquisition of the evidence is before the moment of speech, and present, or ‘direct’ in that system, where EAT=UT). For us, the temporal distinctions discussed in this paper are not relativized to an EAT, i.e. it’s not the case that in a Direct Aorist, the speaker is acquiring the evidence about a past event at the moment of utterance. For us the main difference in the examples discussed herein is one of the value of the evidential operator.



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