EVIDENTIALS, INFERENTIALS AND MIRATIVITY IN NEPALI

John Peterson
University of München

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, an increasing number of studies have appeared concerning a somewhat curious "evidential" category which does not in fact denote the source of knowledge, but rather that the knowledge has come as something of a surprise to the speaker. Some researchers, such as DeLancey (e.g. 1997), view this as a separate category which primarily indicates new information and refer to it as the "mirative". Others, such as Lazard (e.g. 1999) prefer to treat the "mirative" as a subclass of a more general and abstract "mediative" category.

This phenomenon appears to be especially common in the Balkan region and also in the Himalayan area, where it is found in a large number of languages, ranging from the Dardic (Indo-Aryan) languages Kalasha and Khowar in the west (cf. Bashir, 1988) to Tibetan and further in the east (cf. the data in DeLancey, 1997), although it is by no means restricted to these regions.

The pattern which has emerged is in essence the following: a single category usually serves to mark hearsay, inference through results, surprise and admiration. By and large, Nepali also fits into this picture, albeit with some restrictions. It is my aim here to first briefly present the Nepali "evidential" system, propose a possible development from an erstwhile perfect construction, and use this information to see to what extent Nepali will be of help in further understanding the category "mirative".

This paper is structured as follows: In section 2, I will briefly present the respective categories in Nepali, both their form and their range of meaning. As detailed data on Nepali have already been published elsewhere (cf. Michailovsky, 1996), this section will be very brief.[1] Section 3 summarizes the varying uses of the mirative/result-inferential category. In section 4, I suggest a possible path of

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[1] Although I was unaware of the data in Michailovsky (1996) at the time of the conference, my classification of the Nepali data is largely the same as his. Thus, where our views are very similar I will merely list the various forms and give a very brief description of their function. For a more detailed account, the reader is referred to Michailovsky's article. The areas where our views differ the most are the analysis of the data and the treatment of the hearsay-evidential category. Hence, considerably more space will be devoted to these topics here.

development for this category from a one-time perfect construction, basing my arguments primarily on the data presented in Wallace (1982) as well as general paths of grammaticalization. This section also includes a new etymology of the hearsay marker *re*. On the basis of the Nepali data, I will present a somewhat different interpretation of the mirative in section 5 and discuss both its questionable status as a separate conceptual category as well as the fact that its marking is generally identical to that of the result-inferential.   Section 6 comprises the conclusions and suggests areas for future research.

2. THE "EVIDENTIALLY" MARKED AND UNMARKED FORMS IN NEPALI

The Nepali aspectual system can be partially represented as follows:[2]

Perfective   Imperfective

| ⟋‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾⟍
                    Continuous   Noncontinuous
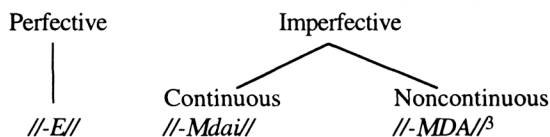//-E//   //-Ṃdai//   //-ṂDA//[3]

Diagram 1: The Nepali aspectual system (simplified)

Nepali has a binary aspectual opposition in the indicative, with both a perfective and an imperfective. Furthermore, the imperfective has an additional binary split between the continuous and the noncontinuous, both of which can appear in the past or nonpast.   All three categories are indicated by the appropriate aspectual marker, which directly follows the verb stem. We will now take a very brief look at the verbal system with respect to evidentiality.

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2   The Nepali verb system still awaits a detailed analysis with respect to the exact value of the following categories. These topics will be treated elsewhere (cf. Peterson, in preparation). Here I will restrict my coments to the most basic facts with respect to both tense and aspect. Following a suggestion from B. Bickel (p.c.), I will refer to the two tenses of the imperfective as "past" and "nonpast", as opposed to the more common interpretation as "past" and "present", respectively. However, the remaing interpretation of the verbal system is my own and does not necessarily represent his views.

3   The distribution of //-ṂDA// is as follows: -∅ after consonants, -ṃ after diphthongs, and -n in conjunction with vowels. There are also the alternative "full" forms -da (after consonants) and -ṃda (elsewhere), which are mainly found in written Nepali. The continuous marker //-Ṃdai//, which consists of the noncontinuous marker //-ṂDA// and the focus marker /-ai/, is the same as that of the "full" forms of //-ṂDA//. //-E// is realized as -e or -i before consonants, and -y- in conjunction with vowels and diphthongs.

2.1 *"Evidentially" Unmarked*

In the imperfective, tense and person are indicated by an auxiliary which is identical in form with the copula. The imperfective is always unmarked with respect to evidentiality (cf. Michailovsky, 1996: 112, especially note 8).

Imperfective
Nonpast

Continuous   Noncontinuous
(1) u   kām gar-dai-cha   u   kām   gar-da-cha /   gar--cha
    3.s work do-CONT-NPT.3.S   3.S work   do-NCNT-NPT: 3.S   do-NCNT-NPT.3.S
    's/he is working'   's/he works'

Nonpast form of the copula: cha

Past

Continuous   Noncontinuous
(2) ū   kām   gar-dai-thyo   ū   kām   gar-da-thyo /   gar--thyo
    3.S work   do-CONT-PT.3.S   3.S work   do-NCNT-PT.3.S do-NCNT-PT.3.S
    's/he was working'   's/he worked / used to work'

Past form of the copula: thiyo
Perfective

The status of what I refer to as the "perfective" marker //-E// is a complex issue and can only be touched upon briefly here. (A more detailed analysis is in preparation.) It is used to form the following categories, among others.

Simple Past

When morphologically unmarked for tense, the perfective marker generally combines with person marking to form a portmanteau morph. This category is an aspectually neutral simple past[4] and has an evidentially unmarked interpretation. As we shall see below, however, the TAM values of other categories marked by //-E// have a quite different status. An example of the simple past:

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4   The analysis given here differs somewhat from that given in Peterson (1999). Since then, following up on suggestions from Karen Ebert and Balthasar Bickel, I have been able to gather data which clearly show that this finite category is indeed not a perfective category but must be considered an aspectually neutral simple past tense. However, as argued in Peterson (1999:342f), the same marker //-E// is clearly used to mark this category as well as categories such as the past perfective (cf. section 3 below) where it is obviously a perfective marker. A further discussion of this topic will be presented in a future study.

(3)   hāmī-harū-le   kām gar-yauṃ[5]
       1-P-ERG   work do-SPT.1.P
       'we worked'

Perfect:

The present-day perfect forms are based on the perfect participle ending in *-e-ko*
'-PFV-NML'. This form is followed by an auxiliary which is homophonous with
the copula:

	Present Perfect			*Past Perfect*		
(4)	us-le	kām	gar-e-ko cha	us-le	kām	gar-e-ko thiyo
	3.S-ERG work	do-PFV-NML AUX:NPT.3.S		3.S-ERG work	do-PFV-NML AUX:PT.3.S	
	's/he has worked'			's/he had worked'		

Perfect forms of the copula: *bha-e-ko cha* (present perfect) and *bha-e-ko thiyo*
(past perfect)

2.2 *"Evidentially" Marked*

2.2.1 *The mirative and inference through results*[6]

This category expresses both unexpected information and inference through
results. The marking of this category is based on the perfective suffix *-e*, but
unlike the "evidentially" unmarked simple past, the mirative/result-inferential
makes use of an auxiliary to denote both nonpast tense and person:

(5)   us-le   kām   gar-e-cha
       3.S-ERG   work   do-PFV-NPT.3.S
       's/he works (unexpectedly)' or 's/he seems to have worked / to work'

However, when the auxiliary appears in the past, the verb form does not
denote surprise or inference through results but rather a sudden action or one
which immediately precedes another. In this respect it also differs from the past
perfect discussed in 2.1 above, which does not denote suddenness:

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[5]   That this category is indeed formed with the perfective marker //-E// can be seen in the
negated simple past, where the negative marker *-n(a)* appears between //-E// and person
marking. Example (3), when negated, would then be:

       hāmī-harū-le   kām   gar-e-n-auṃ
       1-P-ERG   work   do-PFV-NEG-1.P
       'we did not work'

[6]   Michailovsky (1996) refers to this category simply as "l'inférentiel", due to its use in
(result-)inference. However, as I believe the mirative to be a separate conceptual category, I
will retain the somewhat cumbersome term "mirative/result-inference".