

## NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS IN TIBETAN LANGUAGES: THE ISSUE OF MIRATIVITY<sup>1</sup>

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In quite a few languages, not only the order of events and their localization in time, the manner and phases of realization, or their quantity and quality are lexically or grammatically encoded. Additionally, information may be encoded about a) the means by which the knowledge of the event described was acquired by the speaker (evidentiality), and b) the status of this knowledge as old and assimilated vs. new and unexpected (mirativity). In the past fifteen years, both phenomena have been addressed in several papers (see DeLancey 1997 for references).

Typically, self-evident and old knowledge is not coded and is left unmarked, whereas knowledge that is derived by inference or hearsay or through immediate perception is marked. Likewise, expected events are typically not marked, while unexpected events may be marked. On the basis of the Turkish *-mİş* perfect, and similar features in Hare, Sunwar, Tibetan, and Korean, DeLancey (1997) claims that the concept of evidentiality, or at least the marking of inferred knowledge, is to be subsumed under the concept of mirativity. He shows that in Hare and Sunwar, the combination of the mirative/inferential marker with present tense, simultaneity, or imperfective forms expresses surprise, whereas the combination with perfect constructions expresses inference.

If we take a closer look at the Tibetan languages, however, and especially if we compare different varieties, we will find that the opposition between old

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this paper, glosses have been kept as simple as possible, rare or unexpected words or orthography are not explained, loanwords are indicated by italics and square brackets. For the conventions of transliteration and transcription, as well as for more detailed glosses, explications, examples that are not represented here, and especially for the terminology and overview of the temporal morphemes see Zeisler, forthcoming. The concept of absolute tense is not fully grammaticalized in Tibetan languages. Most authors, therefore, prefer an aspectual to a temporal terminology. However, the basic tense-aspect-mood concept is that of relative tense or *taxis*, and the concept of aspect cannot be applied to most of the Tibetan languages.

assimilated vs. new unexpected knowledge is no more basic than the evidential distinction between knowledge that is based on direct perception and knowledge that is not. In the following, I want to show that for the Tibetan languages, evidentiality and mirativity are separate concepts which may or may not overlap, and that there are different strategies to express that an event or the manner of its realization was not expected. The Tibetan example will also show that it might be necessary to distinguish between the concept of old vs. new knowledge (novelty) and the concept of expected and/or acceptable vs. unexpected and/or unacceptable events (mirativity). The concept of novelty crosscuts the concepts of both evidentiality and mirativity, and could be the motivation for occasional or regular overlap or fusion of the two.

## 1. EXPRESSIONS OF EVIDENTIALITY (AND NOVELTY) IN TIBETAN

Evidentiality as well as novelty are not grammatically encoded in Old Tibetan (mid 7th - end of 10th century A.D.) or Classical Tibetan (11th - 19th century), but evidentiality is, at least partially, grammatically encoded in all modern Tibetan vernaculars (see Agha 1993:155-234; Tournadre 1996:219-241 for “Lhasa” Tibetan and the Central as well as Exile Tibetan *koiné*; van Driem, same volume, for South-East Tibetan, Dzongkha; Sun 1993 for Amdo Ndzorge; Haller, in progress, for Amdo-Themchen). Grammatical encoding of evidentiality and novelty appears to be most complex in Ladakhi (West Tibetan, cf. Koshal 1979: 193-225; Zeisler, forthcoming) and least complex in Nangchenpa (Eastern Kham Tibetan, cf. Causemann 1989).

Apparently, the basic distinction in Tibetan languages is between knowledge based on immediate visual perception (new knowledge) and knowledge (old as well as new) that is not based on immediate perception. Generally, the speaker's own controlled actions are treated as self-evident. Events over which the speaker has no control, i.e. actions controlled by other persons, as well as events that are not controlled by an intentional agent (speaker or other) are either immediately perceived, derived from hearsay or inference, or belong to generic facts known by the whole speech community. There are thus five different values of evidentiality, but not all of them are necessarily marked, and in the different Modern Tibetan languages, various combinations are possible. In Nangchenpa, we find only a binary distinction, with the immediate perception of the speaker marked by the final particles /da/ and /thi/, leaving all other means of knowledge unmarked. Both the marked as well as the unmarked forms may be used in mirative contexts. Inference is not grammatically marked, and there seem to be no special forms for quotation or hearsay knowledge.

In “Lhasa” Tibetan, evidentiality is a complex system of basically three terms: knowledge based on immediate perception (new); self-evident and

generic knowledge, not based on immediate perception, inference, or hearsay (old/assimilated); knowledge based on hearsay (new). Knowledge based on immediate perception is marked with the auxiliaries /tʉ:/ *'dug* (present tense and unmarked perfect constructions); /rɛ:/ *red* (future and unmarked past constructions); and /sōñ/ *soñ* (past constructions), with the latter marked additionally by /cuñ/ *byuñ*, if the action is directed towards the speaker. Self-evident knowledge is expressed with the auxiliaries /yö:/ *yod* (present tense and unmarked perfect constructions) and /yin/ *yin* (future and unmarked past constructions); generic knowledge is distinguished from self-evident knowledge by the complex auxiliary /yö:re:/ *yod-pa-red*. Knowledge by hearsay is presented as direct speech with the appropriate evidential markers followed by the quotative marker /-s/ < *zer* 'to say'. Inferred knowledge is expressed with the auxiliary /ša:/ *bžag*, but is found as a perfect construction only. As can be seen, inferred knowledge is treated neither as old/assimilated nor as new knowledge. Additionally, "Lhasa" Tibetan has a set of several probability markers.

Dzongkha shows a quite similar pattern. The basic ternary distinction is between knowledge based on immediate perception (new); self-evident and generic knowledge, not based on immediate perception, inference, or hearsay (old/assimilated); knowledge based on hearsay (new). Self-evident or personal knowledge is marked either by the choice of the auxiliary /yö/ *yod* (in contrast to the auxiliary /dü/ *'dug* of immediate perception) or is left unmarked if other auxiliaries (e.g. /iñ/ *yin*) or the bare verb stem is used. The markers for generic knowledge are, according to van Driem, derived "from the allegro forms of the assimilated, personal knowledge form". Knowledge based on immediate perception can be subdivided into visual vs. sensual perception, a feature also found in Ladakhi. Immediate visual perception is marked either by the auxiliary /dü/ or by the particle /bə-wä/ *pas/bas* if certain auxiliaries (e.g. /iñ/), or the bare verb stem is used; immediate sensual perception by the particle /mä/ *mas* (both replacing the "Lhasa" Tibetan auxiliary /rɛ:/). Inferred knowledge about past events is marked with the particle /nu/ *nug*, which is commonly found as a narrative (mirative?) marker in narrations, again a common feature in Ladakhi as well. Past events that have been witnessed by the speaker are, in contrast, marked by the particles /yi/ *yi* or /ci/ *ci*.

Eastern Amdo and West Tibetan show a somewhat different set of oppositions. In Themchen, the ternary opposition is based on the binary distinction of knowledge based on immediate perception (new) vs. self-evident and generic knowledge, not based on immediate perception (old/ assimilated or new). Knowledge based on immediate perception is marked with the auxiliaries /yokə/ *yod-ʔgis* (replacing the "Lhasa" Tibetan auxiliary /tʉ:/ in present tense

and unmarked perfect constructions), and /re/ *red* (future and unmarked past constructions). Knowledge not based on immediate perception is expressed with the auxiliaries /yo/ *yod* (present tense and unmarked perfect constructions) and /yən/ *yin* (future and unmarked past constructions). Inferred knowledge is subsumed under knowledge not based on immediate perception and is additionally marked with the particle /zəŋ/ *\*zig*. According to Felix Haller (personal communication), the quotation marker /zi/ is found only at the end of direct speech. As in the Nangchenpa data, there is no evidence of marking hearsay knowledge in the Themchen data. In the Ndzorge dialect of Amdo, however, the quotation marker /se/ “signifies that the assertion is based on verbal reports made by others” (Sun 1993:952).

In Ladakhi, the main opposition is, again, between knowledge based on immediate perception and knowledge that is not. Knowledge based on immediate perception is subdivided into visual perception (auxiliary /duk/ *‘dug*) and non-visual perception (/rak/, in Sham and Purik also /nak/ or /ḍak/, LLV *drag* < CT *reg* ‘to reach’ or *rag* ‘to obtain’). Self-evident knowledge is indicated by the use of the auxiliaries /-at ~ -et/ < *ba* + *yod*. Generic knowledge is in most dialects not distinguished from self-evident knowledge, but the dialects of Purik, Western and Southern Sham show a special marking for habitual events /-bat/ < *ba* + *yod* which seems to be closer to the original form. The auxiliary /in/ *yin* is neutral and does not have any evidential value. It seems that more often than not it is associated with self-evident or generic knowledge, but as past marker /pin/ *pa* + *yin* it refers to personal experience. As in Themchen, inferential knowledge is treated as not based on immediate perception. The Inferential Markers /tsuk~tsok/, LLV *tshug*, and /k(y)ak/ (<?) follow the auxiliary /-at ~ -et/. The Inferential Marker /-ok/, LLV *Xog* (<?) most often follows the neutral auxiliary /in<sup>2</sup>/ or the verb stem; the perhaps related Inferential Marker /tok/, LLV *tog* (<?) follows the past stem. The Inferential Marker /inok/, however, may also represent generic knowledge. Knowledge by hearsay is presented as direct speech with the appropriate evidential markers followed by the quote marker /lo/ *lo*, obviously a defective verb “to say”. Additionally, probability of present or future events may be marked with the auxiliary /inḍo/ *yin·gro* ‘maybe’.

The following chart shows the distribution of evidential markers in several Modern Tibetan languages. It should become clear that mirativity, and with the possible exception of Nangchenpa, novelty (that is mirativity in the wider sense, as defined by DeLancey 1997) are not grammatically encoded in Tibetan. The basic opposition between immediate perception and other means of knowledge is represented with a double line.

<sup>2</sup> /inok/ might also be seen as substitute for the missing “Lhasa” Tibetan auxiliary /rg:/.