

1. Introduction¹

The Yukaghir languages, Kolyma (Southern) and Tundra (Northern) Yukaghir, are spoken in three small multi-lingual villages in Saha (Yakut) Republic (North-East of Russia). Both languages have a suffix (*-l'el-*) which signals that the situation was not witnessed by the speaker (Jochelson 1905:400-1; Крейнович 1982:140-144), but inferred on the basis of indirect evidence. The combination of the suffix with the Future marker (*-te-*) expresses hypothetical meaning. Krejnovich cites the following explanations of his Kolyma Yukaghir consultant, which demonstrate these basic distinctions:

- (1) a. *tudel qodo-j* 'He is lying [if we see a person lying]'
- b. *tudel qodo-l'el* 'He has lain [if we see traces of a hunter's lying on the snow and know exactly whose traces they are]'
- c. *tudel qodo-l'el-te-l* 'Probably, it was he who has lain [if we are **not sure** that these are his traces]' (Крейнович 1982:140)

The Evidentiality systems in the Yukaghir languages are essentially similar; for the reasons of space, it is impossible to illustrate each point for both languages in this chapter. In absence of explicit indications to the contrary, the prose description below covers both Yukaghir languages, but is exemplified by Kolyma Yukaghir data. All points of divergence are explicitly mentioned and illustrated by Tundra Yukaghir examples.

This chapter is based on published descriptions (Jochelson 1905; Krejnovich 1958, 1982) and text corpora (Иохельсон 1900; Николаева 1988; Nikolaeva 1997; Maslova 2001), and my own field records and informal observations during two field trips (1987, 1992). It should be stressed that the most essential source of information for a study of an essentially deictic category, i.e. naturally occurring dialogues, is virtually missing in the corpus under investigation. At the present time, the Yukaghir languages are scarcely used for everyday communication, which renders natural recording of a natural dialogue virtually impossible.² As a result, the present study is bound to rely heavily on other types of evidence to infer information about the basic deictic usage of the Evidential: this includes conversations within narratives, which are most often rendered in the form of direct speech dialogues; short narratives relating episodes of the narrator's own life; and native speakers' comments. Other (non-deictic) meanings associated with the same morphological opposition are described on the basis of the entire corpus of available texts.

2. An overview of verb inflection

The Yukaghir verb has the following morphological structure ("S" stands for stem):

¹ I am grateful to all participants of the Workshop on Evidentiality in RCLT (2001) for insightful and encouraging discussion of the previous version of this paper and of Evidentiality in general.

² Both languages are on the verge of extinction: Kolyma Yukaghir is spoken by ca. 50 people, and Tundra Yukaghir by ca. 150 people (Vakhtin 1987).

(2) Polarity-Mood-S-Aspect-Evidentiality-Number-Tense-Clause Type/Person

There are two overt polarity markers, Negative (*el-*) and Affirmative (*me-*). The absence of overt polarity marker signifies affirmative.

The Mood position distinguishes Irrealis (*et--ot-*) and Realis (no overt marking). The Irrealis marker is incompatible with the Future suffix (*-t(e)-*), which is the only overt morpheme that can fill the Tense position. These morphemes thus constitute a single Tense/Mood category with three meanings: Realis (non-Future), Future, and Irrealis, e.g.:

- (3) a. *a:-m* ‘(he/she) made/has made’
 b. *a:-te-m* ‘(he/she) will make’
 c. *m-at-a:-m* ‘(he/she) would make (if...); might make’

There is no obligatory past vs. present distinction (see 4.1 on temporal interpretation of non-Future forms).

The Evidentiality position class comprises two overt suffixes, Inferential (*-l’el-*) and Prospective (*-moži-*)³; these are opposed to unmarked Direct form, e.g.:

- (4) a. *mid’-u-m* ‘(he/she) took/has taken (I saw it)’
 b. *mil-l’el-u-m* ‘(he/she) took/has taken (I did not see it)’
 c. *min-moži-m* ‘(then) (he/she) is going to take (as a consequence something else)’

The Prospective is incompatible with overt Tense/Mood markers and thus could be considered as a member of the Tense/Mood category. Formally, the analysis adopted here is justified by position class considerations: the Prospective takes the same linear position as the Inferential (before the Plural marker), whereas the Future follows the Plural marker, cf.:

- (5) a. *amde-moži-ŋi* ‘(then) (they) will/are going to die’
 b. *amde-ŋi-te-j* ‘(they) will die’

For semantic motivations of this analysis, see Section 3.3.

The Aspect position class comprises of two suffixes, general Imperfective (*-nu-*) and Habitual (*-nun--nunnu-*), e.g.:

- (6) a. *juö-m* ‘(he/she) looked/saw’
 b. *juö-nu-m* ‘(he/she) is/was looking; looks/looked (always/regularly)’
 c. *juö-nunnu-m* ‘(he/she) used to look; always looks now (in contrast with the past).’

In Tundra Yukaghir, the suffix *-nu-* expresses only progressive meaning, e.g. *wie-nu-m* ‘(he/she) is/was making’ vs. *wie-nun-u-m* ‘(he/she) makes, used to make.’

³ In Tundra Yukaghir, the Prospective suffix has the form *-mori-*.

The clause type position subsumes markers of illocution, transitivity, and information packaging structure (the location of grammatical Focus) in finite clauses, as well as of various sub-types of non-finite clauses (medial, relative, etc.). The verb agrees with the subject in person and number. The Number position serves to distinguish singular and plural third person subjects (cf. (5)) and addressees of Imperative. Other person/number distinctions are expressed in the final structural position; these markers are present only if the subject is not marked as grammatical Focus.

Transitive and intransitive verbs have different clause type/person paradigms. The Inferential suffix triggers two deviations from regular agreement patterns. First, the 3sg Inferential form of intransitive verbs follows the transitive agreement pattern, as in (7b), or simply lacks overt clause type/person marker, as in (7c); the corresponding Direct form is shown in (7a).

- (7) a. *sög-i* enter-INTR:3sg
 b. *söw-l'el-u-m* enter-INFR-0-TR:3sg
 c. *söw-l'el* enter-INFR(3sg)

Conversely, the first person Inferential forms of transitive verbs follow intransitive agreement pattern (Крейнович 1982:143)

- (8) a. *t'ine* chop(TR:1sg)
 b. *t'ine-l'el-d'e* chop-INFR-INTR:1sg
- (9) a. *t'ine-j* chop-TR:1pl
 b. *t'ine-l'el-d'el'i* chop-INFR-INTR:1pl

These deviations may have a phonological motivation, since the 3sg intransitive and 1pl transitive clause type/person markers are formally (and probably etymologically) identical (*-j/-i*), which means that functionally opposite deviations occur in identical phonological contexts. On the other hand, the switch to intransitive agreement in the first person forms correlates with a certain decrease in semantic transitivity triggered by the Inferential marking (see Section 5.2 on the semantics of first person Inferential forms).

3. The category of Evidentiality

3.1 Eyewitness vs. noneyewitness

The core of the Evidentiality system is formed by the morphological opposition between Direct Realis and Inferential forms. Two major classes of contexts which require the Inferential marking are **inference** from visible traces of the situation and reported information, or **hearsay**, e.g.:

- (10) a. *taŋ me:me: naha: motlorqo-j-ben=ŋo:-l'el*
 that bear very thin-ATTR-NR=COP-INFR(INTR:3SG)
 That bear was very thin [as can be seen from his traces]. (N54:10)⁴
- b. *mieste-ge alaŋcin aŋil'-ge nodo nojdi:-t*
 place-LOC Alanchin mouth-LOC bird watch-SS:IPFV
modo-l'el-ŋi.
 sit-INFR-3pl:INTR
 [As people who once roamed together with him in their youth told,] they were
 sitting at a place called Alanchin mouth, watching for birds. (K4:72-73)

Thus, the Yukaghir Direct vs. Inferential distinction instantiates the A1 Evidentiality system, as defined in the introduction to this volume (eyewitness vs. noneyewitness). Similarly to other languages of this type (cf., e.g., (Dixon, this volume) on Jarawara), the concept of 'eyewitness' depends on the nature of the situation. In particular, it does not necessarily imply visual evidence: the situation is conceived as witnessed if it is perceived by means of the appropriate sense, cf. the contrasting forms in the following example:

- (11) [...] *aji:-l'el-u-m, šar qoha-s'* [...]
 shoot-INFR-0-TR:3 something burst-INTR:3sg
 ... (then) he shot, something burst... [During a hunting trip, the speaker hears the sound of shot (cf. the second clause) and infers that his fellow hunter (whom he cannot see at the time of situation) made a shot.]

This example is particularly interesting since the same piece of auditory sensory evidence (the speaker hears the shot) is conceived of as direct evidence (eyewitness) for one situation, but as the basis of inference (noneyewitness) for the other. The contrast is determined by the fact that the verb *qoha(j)*- 'burst' signifies a sound, i.e. a situation which can only be perceived by hearing, which is not the case for the situation of shooting.⁵

Thus, the Inferential form always invokes two situations, the situation being described (*S*) and the situation that serves as the source of information (*E*, for 'evidence'). *E* may but need not be explicitly mentioned, cf. (10) and (11), but it must be distinct from *S*. The eyewitness (Direct) term signifies that *S* is described on the basis of direct observation of *S*, i.e. *S* and *E* are not distinguished.

⁴ Reference to published text corpora are organized as follows: the letter refers to the text corpus (N for (Nikolaeva 1988), K for the Kolyma Yukaghir corpus of (Maslova 2001), T for the Tundra Yukaghir corpus in the same book); it is followed by text number and sentence number(s) within the text. All examples without explicit references are taken from my unpublished field records. The relevant context information for text examples is summarized in brackets [].

⁵ Krejnovich (1982:208) claims that inference on the basis of auditory information can be marked by suffix *-že-* (in Subject-Focus constructions). In actual fact, this suffix is a non-productive detransitivizer (used with a very small group of verbs), and thus cannot function as a regular Evidential marker.

3.2 Deferred evidence

One of the most striking features of the Yukaghir Evidentiality is an extremely broad semantic domain of the noneyewitness term: the Inferential form is used even if the link between a witnessed state of affairs (*E*) and the situation that brought it about (*S*) is most straightforward and ‘trivial’. One of the most telling natural examples is given by E.A.Krejnovich: a Yukaghir friend of his saw him again after twenty two years and said:

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- (12) *Krejnovit' me-lugu-mu-l'en' me-köl-mu-l'en'*
 K. AFF-old-INCH-INFR:INTR:3sg AFF-slim-INCH-INFR:INTR:3sg
 Krejnovich has grown old and slim (INFR) (Крейнoвич 1982:141)

The Inferential forms signal that the speaker did not witness the process of Krejnovich’s growing older and slimmer, but only saw the result, i.e. the state of his being old and slim (after he had seen him being younger and fatter before). Some similar examples from Kolyma Yukaghir:

- (13) a. *emej=taŋpe kel-ŋi, lebejdi:-le ningo:*
 mother=ASC come-3pl:INTR berries-ACC lots.of
šaqal'e-š-l'el-ŋa:
 gather-CAUS-INFR-3pl:TR
 Our mother and her companions came, they had gathered a lot of berries. [The speaker saw the berries when they came.] (K5:103).
 b. *mit-in pugedan'd'e šörile-lek jal-l'el-mele [...]*
 1pl-DAT tzar letter-FOC send-INFR-OF:3sg
 The tzar has sent us a letter [which is already received.] (K1:26)

Thus, the Inferential can be used to signal that the speaker did not witness the event as it was going on, even if she has first-hand eyewitness evidence of that event by the time of speech. Although examples like in (12)-(13) could be subsumed under the notion of inference from visible traces, they are clearly distinct from genuine instances of (non-trivial) inference, as in (11a). In such examples, the Inferential suffix appears to express **deferred evidence** meaning (cf. (de Reuse, this volume) on past deferred evidence marker in Western Apache), i.e. it signals just that the information on the situation was obtained later the situation had taken place, independently on the type of this information (eyewitness vs. noneyewitness).

The deferred evidence semantics is particularly clear in descriptions of speaker’s own actions, which cannot be accounted for in terms of inference, e.g.:

- (14) a. *ataq-un kun'il-get ningo: i:die-l'el-d'i:l'i*
 two-AT ten-ABL lots.of catch-INFR-INTR:1pl
 It turned out that we had caught more than twenty. [The speaker participated in fishing, yet the fish was counted only afterwards.] (K5:92)

- b. *ta: ejre-t met me:me: abut aɟil'-ge ta: cha:j-e*
 [there walk-SS:IPFV] I bear lair inlet-LOC there tea-ACC
o:ža:-l'el-d'e
 drink-INFR-INTR:1sg
 While walking there, I drank tea near the lair of a bear. [The speaker noticed the lair later.]

On the other hand, examples like in (11), where situations *S* and *E* are simultaneous, show that the Inferential can also express purely noneyewitness meaning. Thus, the noneyewitness and deferred evidence meanings are expressed by means of the same grammatical form, which is opposed to unmarked ‘simultaneous eyewitness’ form.

3.3 Prospective vs. Direct Future

The Prospective form encodes a situation in the future (*S*) viewed as a consequence of an earlier situation (*E*), e.g.:

- (15) a. *met qollume tiŋ lebie-get kewe-j-moži:-je*
 I soon this earth-ABL go-PFV-PRSP-INTR:1sg
 I am to leave this earth soon [since I am very old].
 b. *met albo:-je, met uke-j-moži:-je*
 I lose-INTR:3SG I go.out-PFV-PRSP-INTR:3SG
 I have lost, (this means that) I have to go out. (N21:28)

Thus, the Prospective resembles the Inferential in that it implicitly refers to an additional situation (*E*), which serves as the source of information on *S*. This semantic feature determines the semantic contrast between the Prospective and the Direct Future, which expresses a hypothesis about future without any reference to the evidence on which this hypothesis is based. The semantics of this opposition is thus parallel to the Inferential vs. Direct Realis distinction, cf.:

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| (16) | [–Future] | [+Future] |
| [+Evidential] | Inferential | Prospective |
| [–Evidential] | Direct Realis | Direct Future |

The eyewitness vs. noneyewitness distinction is neutralized in the Future contexts.

To sum up, the morphological category of Evidentiality subsumes two interrelated semantic parameters, the presence of a source of information (*E*) distinct from the situation being described (*S*) and relative tense of *S* with regard to *E*, as summarized in the following scheme:

| | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (17) | Source of Information | Relative Time of Evidence |
| Direct | eyewitness ($E = S$) | simultaneous evidence |
| Inferential | noneyewitness | deferred evidence ($t_E > t_S$) |
| Prospective | (noneyewitness) | anterior evidence ($t_E < t_S$) |

The relative time of evidence correlates with absolute tense: simultaneous and deferred evidence meanings are limited to non-future situations, anterior evidence, to future situations.

4. Interaction with other grammatical categories

4.1 Tense and Aspect

Since the correlation between Evidentiality and the morphological category of Tense (Future vs. non-Future) is described in 3.3, this section focuses on past vs. present interpretation of non-Future forms, which, to a certain extent, depends on their Evidential semantics.

In order to describe this dependency, it is necessary to distinguish three aspectual types of predicates (cf. Comrie 1976:25):

(18) **Perfective predicates:** telic verbs without Imperfective markers.

Imperfective predicates:

Habitual: verbs marked for habitual/generic meaning and predicates signifying stable properties.

Continuous: atelic verbs and telic verbs marked for progressive meaning.

The temporal semantics of non-Future forms is summarized in (19):

| (19) | Direct Realis | Inferential |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Perfective: | past | past |
| Continuous: | past/present | past |
| Habitual: | past/present | past/present |

The Inferential form entails past time reference for any non-habitual predicate (as shown by virtually all examples in this paper), whereas the Direct Realis form allows present interpretation of any Imperfective predicate, cf. (1a) and (6). Thus, the Direct Realis and Inferential forms differ only with regard to temporal interpretation of continuous predicates. This distinction seems to be determined by the deferred evidence meaning of the Inferential suffix: if the situation being described precedes the time of evidence, and the evidence is available at the time of speech, then the situation itself must precede the time of speech. Thus, for all situations viewed as temporally limited, the deferred evidence meaning implies past time reference. If, however, the situation is conceived of as a characteristic feature of a protracted period of time, this implication does not apply, since such a period can easily include both the evidence time and the time of speech, cf. examples (22) and (24).

In Tundra Yukaghir, the Inferential is incompatible with the Progressive marker (**-nu-**), so that the constraint on present interpretation of Continuous predicates applies only to atelic verbs. In Kolyma Yukaghir, the same suffix serves as a general Imperfective marker (see (6b)) and can be combined with the Inferential in both progressive (20) and habitual (22) meanings. In this morphological context, the Inferential suffix can be used only in its hearsay meaning, i.e. the notion of inference

from visible traces (or deferred visual evidence) is incompatible with the Imperfective meaning.

4.2 Tense and Mood

The Irrealis Inferential forms are possible but extremely rare in natural discourse. They occur only within stretches of discourse related in the Inferential form throughout, i.e. if the whole description of the episode is based on hearsay (see Section 5), e.g.:

- (20) *tamun-gele* *el-l'uö-l'el-ŋi*
 that-ACC NEG-see-INFR-3pl:INTR
juö-l'el-ŋide *m-et-aji:-nu-l'el-ŋa.*
 see-INFR-SS:COND AFF-IRR-shoot-IPFV-INFR-3pl:TR
 [Two swans passed by (INFR)]. They did not see that (INFR). If they had seen it, they would be shooting at them (IRR+INFR). (K4:94-95).

The Irrealis falls within the scope of Inferential in all examples of this sort, i.e. the Inferential signals that the complex fact expressed by the conditional construction as a whole has been learned from hearsay.

The combination of Inferential and Future markers expresses hypothetical modality (Крейнович 1982:140-141). The following examples show that it can be used to encode hypotheses about present (21a) and past (21b) situations:

- (21) a. *a:che chuge-ge jo:dude-t ejrie-l'el-te-j.*
 deer track-LOC turn-SS:IPFV walk-INFR-FUT-INTR:3sg
 He is probably walking along deer tracks. (K3:48)
 b. *locil-ŋin lebie-d emej-ŋin tadi:-nu-l'el-te-m.*
 fire-DAT soil-AT mother-DAT give-IPFV-INFR-FUT-TR:3sg
 Probably, he used to give it to the Fire, to Mother of the Earth. (K4:57)

This form cannot be used with future temporal reference, i.e. a hypothesis about future must be expressed by means of the Direct Future form.

This use of the Inferential suffix may seem to indicate that it acquires epistemic meaning. However, the meaning of hypothesis can also be taken as the invariant semantic component of the Future suffix, i.e. the Hypothetical (Inferential Future) and Direct Future form can be assumed to have the same epistemic meaning and to differ in time reference only. Under this assumption, the Inferential suffix in the Hypothetical form contributes the temporal meaning of non-Future, but does not bear the epistemic meaning, and thus preserves its basic meaning of non-witnessed past/present situation. Essentially the same approach seems to be taken by E.A.Krejnovich, who describes the Inferential Realis and Hypothetical forms as two variants of the “noneyewitness mood”, “certain” and “uncertain” respectively (1982:140).

4.3 Clause type

The Evidential suffixes do not occur in Imperative sentences. In questions, the Inferential marking is possible, but extremely infrequent. It is attested in specific questions only and

applies to the **presupposition** of the question: in (22), for example, the Inferential indicates that the speaker has not witnessed people going away from his current location:

- (22) *qodo ti:-t kebej-nu-l'el-ŋi?*
 how here-ABL go-IPFV-INFR-3pl:INTR
 'How do people go away from here?' (N35:513)

In contrast with most languages that allow Evidential marking in interrogative sentences (cf. Aikhenvald, this volume), the Inferential form of question does not involve any assumptions about the addressee's source of information.

5. Semantic extensions of the Inferential suffix

5.1 Inferential with predicates of internal properties: mirativity

Strictly speaking, internal properties (being clever, kind, bad, etc.) can only be inferred on the basis of their external manifestations; however, predicates signifying such properties can occur in both Direct and Inferential form. As it seems, the morphological distinction is drawn between properties that are displayed and/or acknowledged by the speaker for the first time (Inferential) and properties that have been established earlier and are therefore known to be present (Direct). For example, in a narrative about the speaker's very first hunting experience, whereby he was supervised by his elder brother, the brother makes two encouraging statements, first (23a) (right after the hunting was over) and then (23b):

- (23) a. *qal'it'e o:-l'el-d'ek*
 best.hunter COP-INFR-INTR:2sg
 You proved to be a real hunter!
 b. *qal'it'e o:-d'ek*
 best.hunter COP-INTR:2sg
 You are a real hunter!

The Inferential marking in (23a) indicates that the elder brother has inferred, on the basis of the boy's behavior, that he has a set of qualities required of *qal'it'e* (the best hunter of a tribe). By the time of the second utterance, this fact has already been established, and the Direct form is appropriate.

This semantic distinction implies that if the speaker expects a certain quality to be present, this quality would not be predicated in the Inferential form; in other words, the Inferential acquires some sort of **mirative** semantics (DeLancey 1997), e.g.

- (24) a. *aŋa-n'e-l'el adaŋ*
 mouth-COM-INFR(INTR:3sg) this
 'This one has turned out to be voracious!' [N42:27]
 b. *önme-n'-d'e ŝoromo o:-l'el-d'ek!*
 mind-COM-ATTR person COP-INFR-INTR:2sg
 'You have turned out to be a clever person!' [N31:579]

5.2 First person Inferential: inadvertent actions

If the speaker is a participant of the situation being described, the situation can be considered ‘eyewitness’ *par excellence*. In this context, the Inferential suffix can be used in its deferred evidence meaning (see examples (14)). Apart from this, the Inferential can be used to encode inadvertent actions (Крейнович 1982:141-142), e.g.:

- (25) a. *met chohojo joŋža:-l'el-d'e*
 I knife forget-INFR-INTR:1sg
 I have forgotten my knife. [N28:57]
- b. *modo-t taŋdiet mala-j-l'el-d'e*
 [sit-SS:IPFV] then sleep-PFV-INFR-INTR:1sg
 I was sitting and then somehow fell asleep.

This meaning appears to be limited to first person Inferential forms.

5.3 Inferential in non-finite forms: relative past

In Tundra Yukaghir, the Inferential suffix is used in non-finite forms as a marker of relative past; in this function, it is paradigmatically opposed to the Progressive suffix, which expresses relative present, e.g.:

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- (26) a. *sew-l'el-da-ha mon-i*
 enter-INFR-3-DS say-INTR:3sg
 When he had come in, she said:... (T1:231)
- b. *arej neri-nu-da-hane sal'hari:-gi me-lepege-t'*
 suddenly bite-PROG-3-DS:COND tooth-POSS AFF-fall.off-PFV:INTR:3sg
 Suddenly, as it was gnawing like that, its tooth fell out. (T8:51)

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- (27) *wie-l'el-d'e köde* ‘person who has/had made’
wie-nu-je köde ‘person who is/was making’

This usage of the Inferential suffix is clearly related to the temporal (deferred evidence) component of its primary meaning. Both the Inferential and Progressive meanings imply the existence of a temporal reference point distinct from the time of situation and the time of speech, time of evidence and reference time respectively. For non-finite forms, the temporal reference point is identified with the time of main clause situation, which leads to interpretation of the Progressive as relative present, and the Inferential, as relative past. Grammaticalization of this distinction in non-finite forms may have determined the constraint on compatibility of the Inferential and Progressive suffixes in finite forms (see 4.1).

In Kolyma Yukaghir, the use of the Inferential suffix in non-finite forms is limited to conditional forms in counterfactual conditional constructions (cf. (20)); there is no relative tense opposition of the kind exemplified in (26)-(27).

6. Discourse strategies: shift of the deictic center

Given the eyewitness semantics of the Direct form, one would expect to find whole narratives related in the Inferential form throughout whenever a speaker describes events about which he learned from someone else, including all sorts of oral heritage. Indeed, this form of narrating events is quite common: the speaker would consistently use the Inferential form to signal that she learned about the events from someone else.

However, if the context unambiguously rules out the speaker as a potential witness of the events being described, the speaker can choose another strategy, whereby the story is narrated in the Direct form and the Evidentiality marking is reoriented towards another potential recipient of information, usually the main protagonist of the story. In other words, the “reference point” with regard to which the eyewitness vs. noneyewitness distinction is defined may be shifted from the speaker to a different observer (cf. Крейнович 1958:127). This phenomenon is illustrated by the following example:

- (28) *chaj lolha-j-ge cha:j-ek o:že-ŋile.*
 Tea boil-PFV-DS tea-FOC drink-3pl:OF
oqonastie pulut tude jouje juö-t bicun anil-gele
 Afanasiy old.man 3sg net see-SS:IPFV various fish-ACC
cumu i:die-l'el-u-m.
 all catch-INF-0-TR:3sg
 When the tea was ready, they drank tea. Afanasiy the old man had checked his net and it turned out that he caught all kinds of fish. (K4:124-125)

The Direct form in the first sentence is admissible since it has been made clear earlier in the text that this part of the story is based on hearsay. The immediate context sets one protagonist (Afanasiy) as the deictic center of the situation. The Inferential form is used to indicate that the situation was not witnessed by the observer singled out by the context: Afanasiy did not see the process of fish getting into his net.

The choice between ‘Direct’ and ‘Inferential’ discourse strategies seems to be determined by the speaker’s commitment to the truth of the whole story, but in a somewhat unexpected way: the consistent Inferential marking is used to highlight the positive epistemic stance and to stress that the listener is supposed to take the story as truthful. For example, an episode of Yukaghir history which had happened before the speaker’s lifetime or a mythological story would almost certainly be narrated in the Inferential form: since it is clear that the speaker has no first-hand information, he would consistently indicate that he does have some other source of reliable information. On the contrary, a fairy tale can be easily told in the Direct form (although the Inferential strategy is possible as well). There seems to be a slight difference between Kolyma and Tundra Yukaghir conventions: the Inferential marking used throughout a narrative (including fairy tales) appears more common in the former, so that the “shifted” usage figures more prominently in Tundra Yukaghir. However, the number of narrators is so small that it is easy to take an accidental difference in their personal narrative styles for a difference between languages.

At another level, even a story narrated in the Inferential form can occasionally switch to the Direct form for an episode or two, most often when the speaker goes into

vivid details of some episode (as if she were an actual witness of the situation). Moreover, the deictic center may shift multiple times in the course of a narrative between several potential observers (including the speaker), the result being a quite complex interplay of speaker-oriented and shifted Inferential marking. Some instances of the Inferential marking in Tundra Yukaghir appear not to invoke any specific observer; consider the following example:

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- (29) *tide talhuo-d'e t'i: qu:dej-nu-reŋ endu*
 that hide-AT people climb-PROG-SS:IPFV each
ma:rqa-n t'awjuol-ek lew-l'el-ŋu-mle sawhaq=enmu-t.
 one-AT piece-FOC eat-INFR-pl-TR:OF.3 plate=DSTR-ABL
 It turned out that those hidden men, before they climbed up the tree, had eaten a piece from each plate. (T1:395)

The discourse context of (29) contains two groups of protagonists, the primary participants of the situation (A) and the owners of the plates (B). The sentence appears immediately after the information that the B-group found out that some food is missing from their plates. The Inferential suffix cannot be interpreted with regard to the A-group (they did witness their own eating), nor to the B-group, since they are unable to find out, at this point of the story, who had eaten the food. It appears that the Inferential is used because the situation occurred before the current reference time of narrative, i.e. to signal a deviation from temporally iconic presentation of events. In other words, the deferred evidence meaning is reinterpreted with regard to the speaker-listener interaction (the evidence is provided later than suggested by the story line). This use of the Yukaghir Inferential resembles the commentative function of evidential markers in Abkhaz (Chirikba, this volume); however, such examples are too rare for any positive conclusions.

It seems worth mentioning that the deictic shift phenomenon has somewhat paradoxical implications with regard to the grammatical status of Evidentiality in Yukaghir. On the one hand, the possibility to use the Direct form for situations that were not witnessed by the speaker seems to indicate that the Evidentiality distinction proper is not obligatory (hence, not grammatical); on the other hand, the shift of deictic center is quite common for deictic categories (cf., e.g. “narrative present” phenomena) and seems to show that the category has been extended to cover a broader range of contexts and thus to indicate a more advanced grammaticalization.

7. An Evidentiality strategy: Result Nominal?

Krejnovich (1982:140, 208-209) mentions constructions with the Result Nominal (suffix *-o:l*) in the predicative function as a strategy used to indicate the information about the situation is based on its visible traces. The primary function of this construction is to present a state of affairs as a result of a preceding action:

- (30) a. *tabun poŋžube lukil eju:-l-o:-gi*
 that [wood.grouse arrow get-0-RNR-POSS]
 It is the trace of wood grouse's arrows. (N6:38)

- b. *met-kele met es'ie jad-o:-gi [...]*
 [I-ACC my father send-RNR-POSS]
 It was my father who had sent me (lit. (My being here) is a result of my father's having sent me.) (N22:35)

As shown by these examples, the situation itself may (30b), but need not (30a) be witnessed by the speaker (example (30a) is the conclusion of a mythological story intended to explain the origin of white spots on pike's skin). In neither case it is assumed that the information about the preceding situation is (or can be) inferred from the observable state of affairs: the speaker has this knowledge from some other source. In most cases, it is assumed that the listener can observe the result (e.g. the speaker being at certain place, as in (30b)), but not the situation that brought about this result (his father having sent him there), and the latter constitutes the information conveyed by the sentence. As it seems, this construction neutralizes the Evidentiality distinctions that otherwise must be encoded morphologically (by choosing between the Direct and the Inferential form), yet it can not be considered an Evidentiality strategy.

8. Conclusion

According to the classification adopted in this volume, the Inferential vs. Direct morphological opposition in Yukaghir instantiates the binary 'eyewitness vs. noneyewitness' (A1) Evidentiality system and features some semantic overtones characteristic for such systems cross-linguistically, such as mirative connotations and inadvertent interpretation of first person Inferential forms. On the other hand, this opposition is built into a morphological category with a strong temporal dimension, so that the noneyewitness term can also signify deferred eyewitness evidence. The resulting Evidentiality system comprises of three terms: simultaneous eyewitness evidence (unmarked), noneyewitness and/or deferred evidence, and anterior evidence (for future situations only). The deferred evidence meaning of the noneyewitness term accounts for semantic extensions which seem to be cross-linguistically unusual for A1 systems, the shift of deictic center and the relative past meaning in non-finite forms.

The data presented here suggest that the temporal semantics plays a more significant role in Tundra Yukaghir, where some instances of the Inferential marking seem to display a perfect-like meaning. Since the noneyewitness meaning figures saliently in all native speakers' accounts of the semantics of Inferential suffix and can be thus taken to constitute its semantic prototype, the situation in Tundra Yukaghir appears to display the mirror-image of a more cross-linguistically common situation whereby Perfect forms are used as an Evidentiality strategy. However, available data are insufficient to reconstruct the diachronic development of the Inferential suffix, in particular, to find out whether the temporal semantics of this suffix results from grammaticalization of a noneyewitness marker or vice versa.

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