

The category of evidentiality and mirativity in Chechen

Chechen (Nakh branch of Northeast Caucasian) has an unusually complex system of previously undescribed evidential and mirative categories. The Chechen category of evidentiality has three values: witnessed, non-witnessed and quotative (with quotative-reduplicated).

Witnessed: The witnessed past is used if the speaker saw the event.

1. Zaara dwa-j-axa-ra.
Zara.ABS DX-J-go-WP
“Zara went away” (I saw.)

The action occurred once in the past, on a particular occasion. There is a salient evidential meaning: the speaker saw the event. The witnessed past is often used for sequenced clauses on the narrative timeline.

Nonwitnessed: Chechen has an evidential system to code the source of the information. Indirect evidence is expressed by the copula *xilla* in the indirect past tense:

2. Zaara j-iena xilla
Zara J-come.CVant COP.PST.IND
“Zara has come.”(EV.INDIR) (e.g. I see her shoes in the hall but didn't see her come; expected/usual situation; congruent with my expectations)

Quotative: Unlike the witnessed and non-witnessed evidential, the quotative evidential is not grammaticalized. It is expressed by the quotative particle *boox*, which can be reduplicated, if the speaker wants to say that s/he cannot take the responsibility for this information.

3. Naana hwa-j-iena boox (-q)
mother.ABS DX-J-come.CVant QUOT
“Mother has come, they say.”
4. Muusai jow maare-j-axna boox-boox(-q)
Musa.GEN daughter marry-J-go.PRF QUOT-RED
“Musa’s daughter got married.” (a quote of a quote)

Mirative: Chechen also possesses the category of mirativity. Mirativity is the grammatical marking of unexpected information (DeLancey; 2001). The mirative meaning can be expressed by the suffix *-q*. The suffix *-q* is added to the verb stem or to the auxiliary verb in compound tenses and can be used with all tenses.

5. Zara j-iena.
Zara J-come.PRF
“Zara has come.”(I expected her to come).

6. Zara j-iena-*q*.
 Zara J-come.PRF-MIR
 “Zara has come!”(I didn’t expect her to come).

The category of mirativity in Chechen is independent of evidentiality, and therefore they can be combined:

7. Zara j-iena xilla-*q*
 Zara J-come.CVant COP.PST.INDIR-MIR
 “Zara was here!” (EV.INDIR + MIR) (I see her special cookies in the kitchen.
 (unwitnessed coming) unexpected/new situation (not congruent with my expectations)).

Addressee-oriented form: There is a special use of the dative, restricted to the addressee (2s/p, 1incl, *1excl), which can be combined with evidential and mirative, and which expresses that the information is relevant for the addressee.

	SG	PL excl/incl
1p	-	-/vain
2p	hwuuna	shun
3p	-	-

These forms of pronouns can be used if the speaker knows that the hearer is interested in her/his information, or if the hearer expects some information from the speaker.

8. Musa hwa-v-iena xilla shun
 Musa into-V-come.PRF COP.PST.IND 2p.DAT
 “Musa has come.” (I knew that you expected him, but I didn’t see him)
9. As suuna koch ecna hwuuna
 1s.ERG 1s.DAT dress buy.PRF 2s.DAT
 “I bought myself a dress.”(You already knew that I was going to buy something for myself).

The evidential dative must immediately follow the verb, unlike the indirect object, which is in normal word order for an object. This dative combines mirativity and person in a way that is cross-linguistically distinctive.

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