

Ethno-syntactic investigation of evidentiality in Eastern Uralic Languages and the (Sub)Arctic

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NEMZETI KUTATÁSI,
FEJLESZTÉSI ÉS INNOVÁCIÓS HIVATAL

outline

Evidentiality

Evidentiality in the Uralic languages

Ethnosyntax and the cultural explanation of evidentiality

Research questions

Samoyedic

Permic

Ob-Ugric

The languages of the (Sub)Arctic

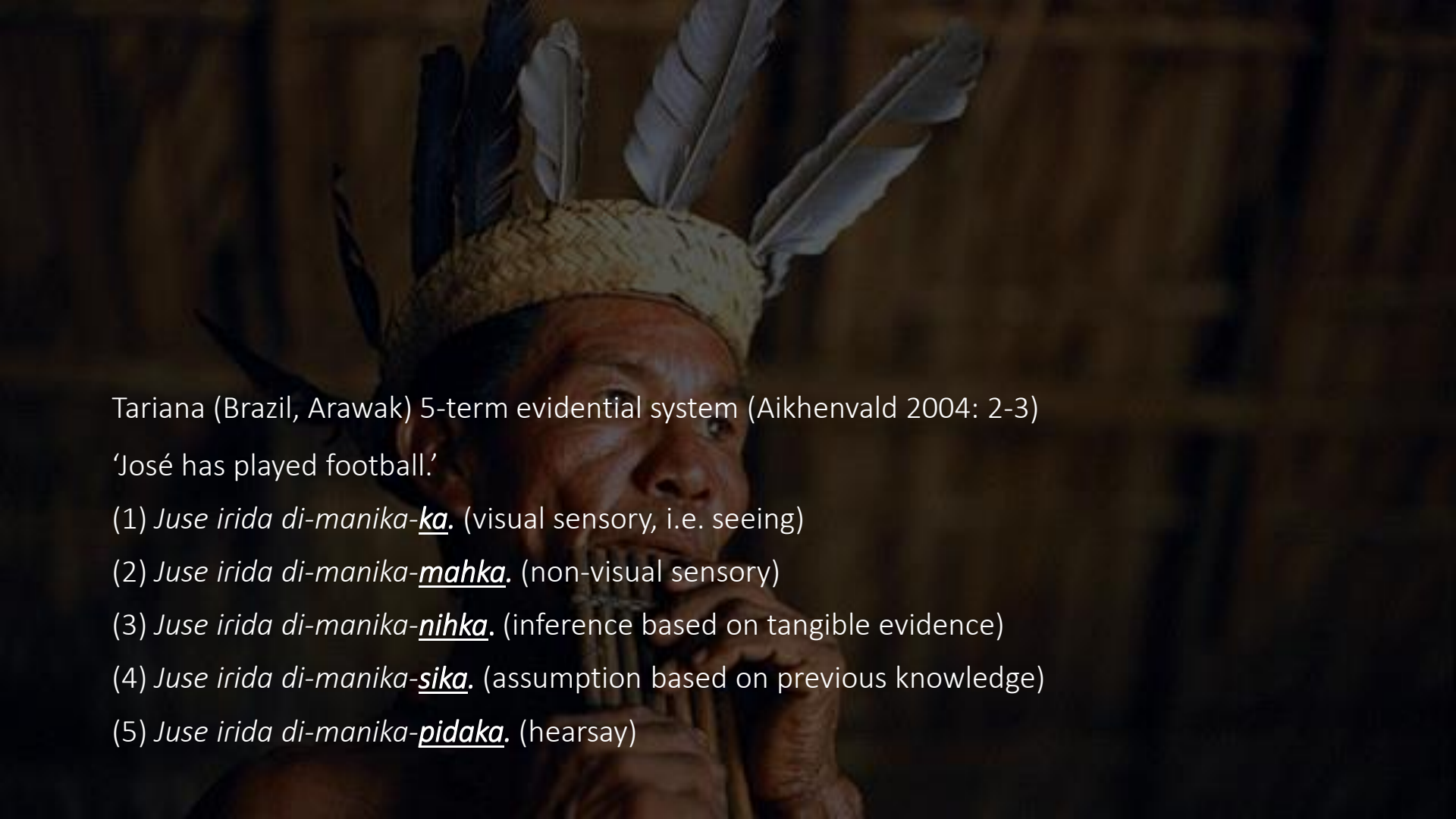
Conclusion

Evidentiality

the linguistic marking of information source and type (Aikhenvald 2004)

- grammatical evidentiality (markers' primary function is evidential, part of the grammatical system, closed-class items)
- evidential strategies (lexical elements, contextual meaning of other categories)
- the definition (and demarcation) of evidentiality encompasses both morphosyntactic and semantic features (Verhees (2019))

The "narrower" definition of evidentiality: morphological evidentials.



Tariana (Brazil, Arawak) 5-term evidential system (Aikhenvald 2004: 2-3)

‘José has played football.’

(1) *Juse irida di-manika-ka*. (visual sensory, i.e. seeing)

(2) *Juse irida di-manika-mahka*. (non-visual sensory)

(3) *Juse irida di-manika-nihka*. (inference based on tangible evidence)

(4) *Juse irida di-manika-sika*. (assumption based on previous knowledge)

(5) *Juse irida di-manika-pidaka*. (hearsay)

Evidentiality in Uralic

- there is grammatical evidentiality in the majority of the Uralic languages

- typologically different types of evidential systems are represented

(cf. Skribnik & Kehayov 2018, Tamm et al. 2018)

- Neutral & reportative (Estonian, Livonian)
- Neutral & indirect (Permic, Mari, Ob-Ugric)
- More complex systems (e.g. auditive, inferential, reportative markers) (Samoyedic languages)

Evidentiality as an areal feature

Evidentiality is considered an areal feature which diffuses easily between languages (de Haan 2013, Aikhenvald - Dixon 1998).

- in the Uralic languages it is often considered a contact-induced change

What are the contact languages in the case of Ob-Ugric and Samoyedic?

- in the Siberian area there are more-or-less similar evidential systems

Permic and Mari:

- Turkic languages in the Volga-Kama area (cf. Helimski 2003) (Tatar for Udmurt, Chuvash for Mari)
- Might also be internal development (Honti 2001, Szabó 2021; cf. Bybee et al. 1994)

At the same time, Russian (a language without grammatical evidentiality) has a huge influence on these languages (bilingual speakers).

Ethnosyntax

- research into the syntax of endangered Uralic languages in Russia has recently acquired a focus on contact linguistics,
- on the effects of language loss on syntax,
- primarily from a generative perspective
- and the number of syntactic descriptions carried out with a typological perspective has increased

- In our approach ethnosyntax combine the newest trends in anthropological linguistics, the use of cognitive linguistic perspectives in comparative linguistics, and entholinguistic research focusing on grammatical structures.

>>> Evidentiality as a typical ethno-syntactic feature
(Bernárdez 2017)

Cultural explanation

„Speaking a language with **obligatory evidentials implies adhering to strict cultural conventions**. Beliefs, mental attitudes, and patterns of behaviour appear to correlate with these.” (Aikhenvald 2004: 361)

Languages with (complex) evidential system:

„**Small groups living in isolated environments** enhance the probability of developing evidentials.

Difficulties in accessing the world around enhance the probability of developing evidentials;

Very tight relations within the group and with neighbouring groups also enhance the probability of developing evidentials.”

(Bernardez 2017)



Research questions

Do the Uralic languages confirm the cultural explanation of developing/maintaining grammatical evidential systems?

Does intensive contact with Russian contribute to the simplification/obsolescence of the evidential systems?

Are there similar processes in the languages of the (Sub)Arctic?



URALIC LANGUAGES

F Finno-Ugric

FO Baltic-Finnic

- FO1 Finnish
- FO2 Karelian
- FO3 Veps
- FO4 Ingrian
- FO5 Estonian
- FO6 Votic
- FO7 Livonian

FS Sami languages

- FS1 Western Sami
- FS2 Central Sami
- FS3 Eastern Sami

FU Ugric

- FU1 Hungarian
- FU2 Mansi
- FU3 Khanty

FP Finno-Permic

- FP1 Komi-Zyrian
- FP2 Komi-Permyak
- FP3 Udmurt

FW Finno-Volgaic

- FW1 Mari
- FW2 Mordvinic

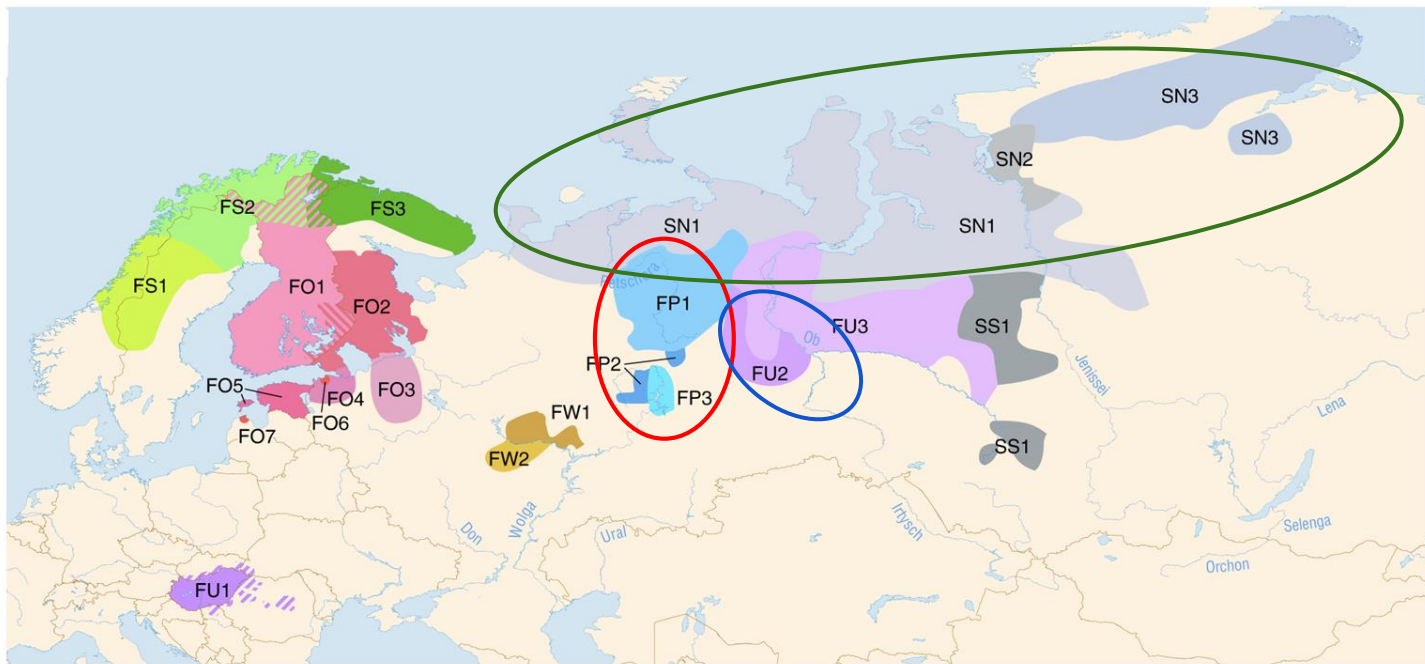
S Samoyedic

SN Northern Samoyedic

- SN1 Nenets
- SN2 Enets
- SN3 Nganasan

SS Southern Samoyedic

- SS1 Selkup



The target languages: the Samoyedic, Ob-Ugric and Permic languages

Samoyed	Tundra Nenets Nganasan Enets Selkup	cc. 44 000/30 000 speakers cc. 800/100 almost extinct 3-4 000
Ob-Ugric	Mansi Khanty	cc. 12 000/1 000 cc.30 000/10 000
Permic	Udmurt Komi-Permyak Komi-Zyrian	cc. 550 000/324 000 cc. 95 000/63 000 cc. 350 000/219 000



Samoyedic languages: (morphological) evidentiality

- Aikhenvald: B-C system (Nenets, Enets, Nganasan + Selkup?) / Plungian: “Quechua-type” elaborated system
- 3-4 choices:
 - direct (visual) or neutral
 - non-visual sensory
 - inferential
 - reportative
- Almost all languages of the world with similar evid. systems typically exist as a minority language (cf. Bernárdez 2017).



Tundra Nenets

Non-visual sensory, inferential, indirective,
assumptive (Jalava 2016, 2017)

Auditive

sarmík-ʔ

wolf-PL

nober-mon-toh

howl-AUD-PL

'The wolves are howling (it is heard).'

Inferential

jibe-tarxa

be.smart-INF.3SG

'He seems to be smart.'

Assumed

mə́n núnih

I child.PL1SG

internat-xəna

boarding.school-LOC

jar-take-xəh

cry-ASSUM-3DU

'My children must be crying in the boarding school.'

For instance: Nganasan inferential: *-huatu* inflectional suffix

Tati tahariāa tani ŋad'ađu tai-huatu tandə t'iid'aʔ-tuə-đu.
It well there brother exist-INFER.3SG that hide-PTCP-PX3SG

'У него, **оказывается**, братишка есть, которого прячет.'
(**'It seems** (that) she has a brother who she hides.')

(ChNS_080214_TwoRavens_flks_s.exs)

Equivalence of the Samoyed morphemes in
Russian language: adverbs, clauses, particles.

		Mansi		Khanty	
		indicative	evidential	indicative	evidential
Active	present	<i>-(e)γ ~ i + V_X</i>	<i>-ne- + C_X</i>	<i>-l- + V_X</i>	<i>-t- + C_X</i>
	past	<i>-s- + V_X</i>	<i>-m- + V_X</i>	<i>-s- + V_X</i>	<i>-m- + C_X</i>
Passive	present	<i>-w- + V_X</i>	<i>-ima- + V_X</i>	<i>-l- + -aj- + V_X</i>	<i>-ti</i>
	past			<i>-s- + -aj- + V_X</i>	<i>-ə_m</i>

Ob-Ugric languages: evidential strategy

(Nikolaeva 1999, Skribnik 2018)

- verbal category
- small system: neutral vs. indirect
- participial-based: participial forms → evidential
- main functions of evidential forms:
 - traditionally: narrative, non-witnessed (*neochevidnoe naklonenie*)
 - Recently (only in scientific literature): evidential (non-first hand, non-visual, resultative, reportative, hear-say, inferential, mirative)
- dialectal distribution: mainly in the Northern dialects + in Eastern Khanty folklore

Ob-Ugric languages

Examples (Northern Mansi)

Resultative, inferential:

Māxum xōsat xul ališl-aŋkwe min-am-ət.
people far fish kill-INF go-EV.PST-3PL

‘People went fishing a long time ago.’ (Balandin 1960. 113)

Non-visual:

(isnasnəl xuntl-i) pasan watan unt-m-ət akway
(window-ABL listen-3SG) table PP sit-EV.PST-3PL still

‘(she is listening from outside) they were still sitting at the table’ (Kálmán 60)

Resultative + unexpected event, mirative:

jurt-xumim-nə ta tūlment-ime-t pōr-anem
friend-man-SG1-LAT PTCL steal-EV.PASS-PL3 spawn-PL>SG1

‘it was my friend who had stolen my spawn’ (VNGY 4. 226)

Examples (Mansi)

Mirative + unexpected event, mirative

sunsi-tä: xarä paul ōl-nä-tä

see-SG.3SG spacious village be-PT.PRS-3SG

'S/he is looking: there is a spacious village in front of her/him]'

Southern Mansi

evidentials

<i>ańśux</i>	<i>mā-ne</i>	<i>il-i,</i>	<i>il-āŋlåtål:</i>
old=man	field-LAT	go-3SG	PF=see.3SG
<i>čalkhan</i>	<i>ås</i>	<i>tunlant-im</i>	<i>ål.</i>
carrot	again	steel-PST.PTCL	be.3SG

'The old man goes to the field, he is watching: the carrots are stolen again.'



Permic languages

- verbal category
- only in the past tenses (fused with the morphological marking of the past tense)
- small system: neutral & indirect
- based on the past participle

1st past - default past tense, evidentially neutral

contextual-pragmatic extensions to general knowledge, reliability and accuracy; focusing on process

2nd past - non-witnessed past, indirect evidential

indirect evidence (hearsay, inference)
mirative (realization, surprise, new information)
can implicate: lower degree of reliability, accuracy, “distancing effect”, focusing on result

There are differences between the languages (e.g. in Komi-Zyrian the 2nd past tense is not always evidential, in Komi-Permyak the mirative use is not as well attested as in Zyrian and Udmurt)

(Tsypanov 2002, Siegl 2004, Kubitsch 2022)

Udmurt

Kalašnikov ***kul-i-z.***

PN **die-PST-3SG**

'Kalashnikov died.'

general statement

general knowledge, known fact for everybody (cf. integrated knowledge)

speaker witnessed the event (e.g. a doctor)

credible source, reliable knowledge

Kalašnikov ***kul-em.***

PN **die-EV[3SG]**

'Kalashnikov died.'

speaker has indirect evidence (e.g. hearsay)

the information is new, surprising either to the speaker or to the listener (cf. unintegrated knowledge)

the source is less credible, the claim can be either true or false (cf. degree of certainty, commitment)

	<u>System</u>	<u>Number of markers</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Part of grammar</u>	<u>Obligatory</u>	<u>Interaction</u>	<u>Origin</u>	<u>Development</u>	<u>Similar ev. system in the area?</u>
Samoyedic	More complex	5-8	Non-visual Inferential Reportative Assumptive	mood/ evidential	? (requires further research)	? (requires further research)	Participles Noun (+ PS evidential marker)	Possibly internal development + possibly external influence	similar but less complex systems (e.g. Yukaghir)
Ob-Ugric	Neutral - indirect	3/4	Indirect ev., Mirativity	mood/ evidential	no	? (requires further research)	Non-finit (past and present participle, gerund)	Possibly internal development + possibly external influence (Komi, Siberian??)	?Selkup (Komi)
Permic	Neutral - indirect	1	Indirect ev. Mirativity	past tenses	no	Restricted	perfect participle	Possibly Turkic influence (but internal development is also possible)	Tatar, Bashkir, Chuvash, Mari

- elder speakers of Udmurt differentiate the past tenses to a better extent and assign evidential functions to them

Ob-Ugric: inconsistencies in the younger speakers' language use (Skribnik 2018)

Nganasan: inconsistencies in the language use of those whose dominant language is Russian (Szeverényi 2022)

Other factors:

- higher and higher degree of bilingualism
 - change of lifestyle (urbanization, modern ways of communication, massive flow of information)
- small groups, isolation, tight relations has a role in **maintaining** evidential systems (cf. Bernárdez 2017)

Obsolescence/simplification of grammatical evidentiality due to Russian contact

- the Eastern Uralic languages confirm the cultural explanation of Bernárdez (2017) at some extent
- formally more complex evidential systems in more remote, hardly accessible areas (Samoyedic → Ob-Ugric → Permic)
- the dialectal distribution of Ob-Ugric evidential markers may support the cultural explanation
- the disappearance of maintaining factors contributes to the obsolescence of evidentiality (or at least to the reinterpretation of evidential markers)

Results

The viewpoint of the speaker has a special role:

- trust
- responsibility
- truth

Linguistic vehicles:

Evidentiality

Direct reported speech (no shifts)

>>> In both cases, the perspective of the current speaker is highly important.

Consequences of the Cultural Explanation

The Cultural Explanation seems to be valid in the case of the languages existing in similar environment.

If the explanation is true for the Samoyed languages, it should most likely be true for more Arctic languages as well.

Evidentiality goes on a par with the cultural conceptualisation of trust in communicative situations and with the external, environmental conditions of the community.

Hypothesis

The Samoyed languages, especially the Northern ones have elaborated evidential system.

basic types of sources:

inferential, (inferred)

reportative (reported, renarrative, + hearsay)

non-visual sensory (~ auditory)

The Samoyed languages

overview of evidentiality in the languages of Arctic based on the literature

Tungusic languages

Chukchi

Inuit-Yupik languages

Yukaghir

(Saami).

These languages are hardly mentioned in the literature on evidentiality.

(Sub)Arctic

The Tungusic languages have also **grammatical evidentiality**, but it is not as complex as in the Samoyed languages.

The Northern Tungusic (Even, Evenki, Negidal, Solon) the morphological marker of **indirect evidentiality** goes back to the *-cA* suffix of perfect.

Evenki provides an example of a modalized evidential system (Plungian 2001):

- three suffixes (*-nA*, *-rkA* and *-rgu*) expressing the ***degree of certainty*** with which the speaker makes an assertion (Nedjalkov 1997: 265)

Tungusic languages

Evidentiality is not a grammatical category.

But:

discourse particles: give speaker evaluation of the truth value (evidentiality) of the clause.

- difficult to describe
- rarely syntactically obligatory
- encoded meanings are difficult to unambiguously translate (Dunn 1999: 76).

The approximative prefix *mel-* can have evidential meaning ('apparently') or can show that the property indicated by the adjective is incompletely evident.

Chukchi

Yukaghir languages (Maslova 2003)

tudel qodo-j	'He is lying [if we see a person lying]
tudel qodo- lel	'He has lain [if we see traces of a hunter's lying on the snow and know exactly whose traces they are]'
Tudel qodo- lel-te-l	'Probably, it was he who has lain [if we are not sure that these are his traces]' (<i>te</i> = future)

- unmarked verb: a speaker has perceived, seen, or heard the event.
- The **-lel-** suffix: the speaker did not see, did not perceive the event, but inferred it indirectly.
- The inferential and direct morphological evidentials form a binary opposition (~ visibility-nonvisibility contrast).
- The Yukagir has characteristics that are not typical of languages with an evidential system.
 - *displacement of the deictic center*
 - *its evidential use must not be accompanied by a shift in perspective, there is no indirect speech.*
- The choice of the strategy is determined by whether the speaker is committed to the truth of the story.

(Non-visual) sensory evidence grammaticalized in the verbal system cross linguistically is rare.

- **in Eurasia only in four Samoyedic languages: Nenets, Enets, Nganasan, and Selkup.**

- the traditional Yukaghir folklore archaic texts:

sensory evidential to be more widespread in the past in the languages of aboriginal Northern Asia peoples.

- basic semantics of the Northern Samoyedic sensory evidential suffixes refer to the auditive perception of non-visible situations (events).

- the grammaticalized language replica of fundamental mental **opposition of ancient mythological thinking** – the opposition of visible and non-visible situations.

Yukaghir: Ilyina 2020

Yup'ik (Miyaoaka 2012): two evidentials
indirect-inferential **-llini-** postbase
reportative/hearsay **=gguq** clitic

Inferential:

Aya-llru-llini-uq

leave-PST-INF-IND.3S

'He left, obviously.'

Reportative:

Aya-llru-uq=gguq

leave-PST-IND.3S=HRD

'He left, it is said.'

- The cultural explanation of evidentiality is supported by the complex evidential systems of the Northern Samoyed languages.
 - With the exception of Saami, the traces of evidentiality in all languages can be detected on different level, however, some of them suffer from the lack of relevant information, linguistic description and language materials.
 - The geographical environment serve good base for development of evidential system, but many other external and internal factors can effect this process.
 - the **perspective of the speaker** is of paramount importance in the proposition,
 - evidentiality is a typical means of perspectivization.
 - The importance of the speaker's point of view is also shown in the fact that there is no shift in point of view, no indirect speech
 - the speaker takes increased responsibility for the statements - and in these languages this is more or less reflected in the systems and means of evidentiality.
- + fundamental mental opposition of ancient mythological thinking – the opposition of visible and non-visible situations.

Conclusion

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Thank you for your attention!