
**Evidentiality and new media in the Caucasus:
the case of Hinuq**

Diana Forker

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David Nathan

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Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project
Department of Linguistics
School of Oriental and African Studies
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG
United Kingdom

Department of Linguistics:
Tel: +44-20-7898-4640
Fax: +44-20-7898-4679
linguistics@soas.ac.uk
<http://www.soas.ac.uk/academics/departments/linguistics>

Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project:
Tel: +44-20-7898-4640
Fax: +44-20-7898-4349
elap@soas.ac.uk
<http://www.hrelp.org>

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Evidentiality and new media in the Caucasus: the case of Hinuq

DIANA FORKER
University of Bamberg

1. INTRODUCTION

Hinuq is the smallest of the Tsezic languages (Nakh-Daghestanian), mainly spoken in one village in the Caucasian mountains in Russia. Evidentiality is a grammatical category in Hinuq. It is fused with the tense system occurring only in tenses with past time reference. In this paper I will explore the way in which the Hinuq evidentiality system can be used to code information obtained through the new media.

2. THE EVIDENTIALITY SYSTEM OF HINUQ

2.1. Introduction

The grammatically marked evidentiality system of Hinuq can be classified as what Aikhenvald (2003, 2004:25-29) calls a system with two choices that distinguishes ‘non-firsthand’ (i.e. unwitnessed) information vs. everything else. Both sides of the opposition are formally marked (*-n(o)* ‘non-firsthand’; *-s* ‘firsthand’). The fused tense and evidentiality suffixes occur in the same slot as other tense, modality, converbal and participial suffixes, with which marking for evidentiality is thus mutually exclusive.

All unwitnessed past forms indicate that the situation or event was not witnessed by the speaker (Section 2.2). In contrast, all witnessed past forms indicate that the described situation or event was directly witnessed by the speaker (Section 2.3). This usually means that the speaker was present and saw the event.

The distinction between unwitnessed and witnessed does not occur in imperatives, but it occurs in interrogative clauses (coding assumptions about the source of knowledge of the hearer). Negation does not interact with evidentiality, i.e. the scope of negation is the situation or event itself, not the source of information.

In addition to the grammatical encoding of evidentiality Hinuq has a Narrative enclitic (*-ʒ*) as a lexical means of marking non-firsthand information. The enclitic is formally and functionally independent of the encoding of evidentiality in the verbal system (e.g. it can co-occur with all TAM forms, including all witnessed and unwitnessed past tense forms, and it has scope over all these forms). Since the Narrative enclitic is almost exclusively used in traditional narration and does not occur in the Pear stories (Section 4), it will not be dealt with in this section.

2.2. Unwitnessed past forms

Unwitnessed past verb forms are mostly used in traditional narratives, fairy tales and legends (1a). They are also used for the descriptions of other events that the speaker

did not witness him/herself. In (1b) the speaker talks about his grandfather whom he did not get to know.¹

- (1) (a) *hes zoq'e-n elu-de aʕa Ibrahim-ʕen*
 one be-UWPST we.OBL-ALOC village.IN Ibrahim-QUOT

hes rek'we
 one man

‘Once there lived a man called Ibrahim in our village.’

- (b) *hayi-š armi-t-es Ø-aq'e-n aʕ-a-do*
 there-ABL1 army-CONT-ABL1 I-come-UWPST village-IN-DIR
 ‘From there, from the army he came to the village.’

Furthermore, unwitnessed past tense forms are used for events and situations that have been inferred by the speaker on the basis of some result or other evidence such as tasting (2a), smelling, etc. In (2b) the speaker finds an empty packet of tea and concludes that somebody drank all the tea.

- (2) (a) [The husband tastes the soup and feels that it is very hot.]
baru-y ʕaši c'ac'aki caʕi-yo zoq'we-n
 wife-ERG much pepper throw-ICVB be-UWPST
 ‘(My) wife added lots of pepper.’

- (2) *zawarka ʕaq'e-n*
 tea finish-UWPST
 ‘Apparently the tea is finished.’

Normally, unwitnessed past tenses are not used with 1st persons (in assertions). However, under exceptional circumstances unwitnessed past tense forms may nevertheless be used with 1st persons, namely, when there is a ‘lack of consciousness effect’. This means that the speaker was not a conscious witness of the event because he or she was unaware of what was really happening. A reason for this might be that he or she was drunk or otherwise absent minded. The use of unwitnessed past forms in this context often creates mirative overtones. For example, in (3) Mullah Nasredin is astonished because he expected to die but surprisingly did not die.

¹ The abbreviations used in this paper are I-V = genders I-V, ABL1 = first ablative, ALOC = ‘Animate location’, AT = location ‘at’, CAUS = causative, CVB = narrative converb, CONT = location with contact, DAT = dative, DIR = directional, DIS = distributive marker, ERG = ergative, GEN1 = first genitive, GEN2 = second genitive, HPL = human plural, ICVB = imperfective converb, IN = location ‘in’, LAT = lative, LOC = locational marker, NEG = negation, OBL = oblique stem (marker), PL = plural, PRS = present tense, PST = past, PTCP = participle, Q = interrogative marker, QUOT = quotation marker, RES = resultative, SPR = location ‘on’, TOP = topic, UWPST = unwitnessed past, WPST = witnessed past.

- (3) *Malla Rasadan Ø-uhe-s-λen Ø-iči-ya-s*
 Mullah Nasredin(I) I-die-RES-QUOT I-sit-PTCP.LOC-ABL1
Ø-iči-ru Ø-ix-no, “de Ø-uhe-n zoq’we-n
 I-be-PTCP.PST I-get.up-UWPST I I-die-CVB be-CVB
gom-te”-λen eλi-n
 be.NEG-really-QUOT say-CVB
 ‘Mullah Nasredin got up from the place where he was sitting and expected to die and said, apparently I did not die.’

Another context where unwitnessed tense forms can be used with 1st person is when speaking about events where the speaker was present, but does not really remember it. For example, in (4) the speaker describes an event that happened in his childhood, about 50 years ago. He does not remember the event very well, and he almost lost consciousness when he was lying on the ground after falling from a high tree.

- (4) *hibayi-š Ø-iλi-n c’ox-oru de q’idi huñel-no*
 there-ABL1 I-fall-CVB fall-PTCP.PST I down breath-and
šit’-no λexwe-n de
 close-CVB remain-UWPST I
 ‘When I fell down from there I remained without breathing.’

2.3. Other past forms (i.e. firsthand knowledge or witnessed past forms)

Witnessed past tenses are mainly used in dialogues when talking about past events witnessed by the speaker (including fictive events). For instance, (5) is from a dialogue describing the directions of a place.

- (5) *ixi λ’ere maždik-a-r Ø-aq’e-ye? Ø-aq’e-s.*
 river.IN upwards mosque-IN-LAT I-come-Q.WPST I-come-WPST
 ‘Did you go to the mosque upwards the river? I went.’

Witnessed past tenses also occur when speakers tell stories from their own lives. Even if the speaker was too young to remember the situation him/herself because s/he took part in the event as a small child, witnessed past tenses may nevertheless be used (6), as one’s own birthday represents a well-known fact for most speakers.

- (6) *de Zakaryaew Maħama-s uži Idris, Ø-u:-s*
 I Zakaryaew Mahama-GEN1 son(I) Idris I-do-WPST
Hinuq aλ-a
 Hinuq village-IN
 ‘I was born in the village of Hinuq as the son of Mahama Zakaryaew.’

Witnessed past tenses are also used when telling one’s own dreams, because dreams are part of the personal experience and described as a visual impression during sleep.

3. EVIDENTIALITY AND NEW MEDIA

Despite the impressive literature on evidentiality that has been published in the last ten years, the question of how speakers of languages with grammaticalized evidentiality systems treat information obtained through various new media remains unanswered. In order to answer this question for Hinuq I tested three types of media formats, including both fictive and real events:

- written (newspaper)
- audio (radio news, audio tape of Hinuq speakers talking to each other)
- visual (TV news, soccer match, video tape of a holiday in the village of Hinuq, Pear story film (Section 4))

I presented Hinuq speakers with a newspaper, a tape of recent audio news, an audio and a video tape made in the village of Hinuq and the Pear story film. I also asked them to recount the TV news and a recent soccer match. The speakers were asked to answer questions like *Se riqi?* ‘What happened?’ or *Ec’endiyu xabar se gof?* ‘What is in the news?’

Written information obtained by reading newspapers, books or online texts is uniformly treated as indirectly acquired and must therefore be expressed by unwitnessed past tense forms. Example (7) stems from a newspaper article about a Daghestanian journalist who was beaten by a group of young men. The use of unwitnessed tenses can be naturally explained by the fact that written information can never depict the event as a whole (in the way that it is possible with a video recording, for example), but represents only a later account of what happened.

- (7)
- | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------------|---------|
| <i>A.M.</i> | <i>Mañacqala-λ’o</i> | <i>swetafor-λ’o</i> | <i>Ø-iλ’i-yo</i> | <i>Ø-iči-n,</i> | |
| name | Makhachkala-SPR | traffic.light-SPR | I-go-ICVB | I-be-CVB | |
| <i>mašina-z</i> | <i>hune</i> | <i>toλ-no</i> | <i>gom</i> | <i>mašina</i> <i>goliš</i> | |
| car-DAT | way | give-UWPST | be.NEG | car | be.PTCP |
| <i>xexza-y-gon</i> | <i>hago</i> | <i>zok’no</i> | | | |
| guy.PL-ERG-TOP | he | beat-UWPST | | | |
- ‘A.M. was crossing the street at a traffic light in Makhachkala, when a car did not let him pass. The guys in the car beat him.’

Radio news is normally encoded by unwitnessed past forms (8a). The reason is that news does not represent a broadcast in real time, but an indirect account of events. If, in contrast, speakers are presented with an audio recording of an event (i.e. a dialogue between other people), then they retell that event by using witnessed past forms since they have been direct witnesses of the event (even though the event happened some time ago), as shown in (8b). Witnessed past forms also need to be used when the speaker listens to the real-time broadcast of an event (e.g. a soccer match or some other sporting event) and retells it afterwards.

- (8) (a) *Kitay-ʔ q'ono poezd sedi.sed-qo c'ox-no.*
 China-CONT two train REC-AT enter-UWPST
q'ono bišonno rek'we tuq'ezī Ø-iq-no
 two hundred man(1) wound I-become-UWPST
 'In China two trains bumped into each other. Two hundred people were wounded.'
- (b) *Nabi-y zonzo ked-zo ked-qo keč'*
 Nabi-ERG REFL.GEN2 daughter-GEN2 daughter-AT song
qaʕ-er-er-ho zoq'e-s
 call-CAUS-CAUS-ICVB be-WPST
 'Nabi made his granddaughter sing a song.'

The test involving the presentation of video material (except from the Pear story) gave basically the same results. TV news is normally treated as indirectly acquired information since the events themselves have not been shown on TV, but only a retrospective account presented by a third person (9a). However, if the speaker has seen an event in TV or on DVD, be it a live broadcast of a soccer match (9b) or a (two-year old) video tape of the Eid ul-Fitr holiday (9c), then witnessed past forms are employed.

- (9) (a) *žiqu Maħačqala-ʕ'o ħalt'o-ʔedo Ø-iʕ'i-ya*
 today Makhachkala-SPR work.OBL-CONT.DIR I-go-PTCP
Ø-uher-no ħussey-n-no haytos ked-no
 I-kill-UWPST Hussein-and he.GEN1 daughter-and
essu-s uži-n
 brother-GEN1 son-and
 'Today in Makhachkala, Hussein, his daughter and the son of his brother were killed while coming home from work.'
- (b) *Anži-y b-eg eži-yo zoq'e-s, amma Dinamo-y*
 Anzhi-ERG III-well play-ICVB be-WPST but Dynamo-ERG
hes gol-no y-ik'i-š, haw-no b-e'ži-š
 one goal(IV)-and IV-beat-WPST that-and III-win-WPST
 'Anzhi played well, but Dynamo made a goal and beat them.'
- (c) *eli aqili fid ywede-ʔ aʕ-a-qo*
 we.GEN1 women Eid day-CONT village-OBL-AT
b-uři-n b-iš-o zoq'we-s
 HPL-go.out-CVB HPL-eat-ICVB be-WPST
 'At the holiday our women went through the village and ate.'

Nevertheless there are two points to make. First, since in Daghestan (almost) everything broadcasted is in Russian, narratives of the news not only contain a great deal of Russian loan words, but are often directly given in Russian. Second, despite the preference for employing unwitnessed past forms when telling the news, it seems that occasionally witnessed past forms are also possible, as in example (10). There are various possible explanations for such a use: the pictures and small films about the event gave the speaker the feeling of being a witness himself or he wanted to make the narration more vivid. The exact circumstances that lead to the use of witnessed past forms in cases such as (10) need to be clarified by further research.

- (10) *Magadan-λ'o* *iše-n* *y-aq'e-n* *hune-be-n*
 Magadan-SPR snow(IV) IV-come-CVB way-PL-and
- r-oc'no* *tok-no* *gosme* *ahlu* *λexwe-s*
 NHPL-cut-CVB electricity-and without people remain-WPST
 'It snowed in Magadan, the streets were closed and the people remained without electricity.'

4. THE PEAR STORIES

The expression of fictive events, such as the description of films, is more open to variation than the narration of news via TV, radio or newspapers (i.e. real events). In elicitation, speakers report that unwitnessed past forms as well as witnessed past forms are possible. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the analysis of 16 fully glossed and translated Pear stories (Chafe 1980) that have been collected by the author in Daghestan between 2006 and 2011.

The Hinuq Pear stories show a considerable amount of variation both between speakers (interspeaker variation) and in the speech of single speakers (intraspeaker variation). Half of the speakers used tenses with the same time reference and evidentiality value throughout the whole narrative (present tenses, witnessed past tenses or unwitnessed past tenses). The other half of the speakers showed variation between at least two types of verb forms. Table 1 displays the verb forms occurring in the Hinuq Pear stories. As can be seen from this table, verb forms with present time reference were preferred over verb forms with past time reference. Unwitnessed and witnessed past forms occur with almost equal frequency.

Table 1
 Verb forms occurring in the Hinuq pear stories

PRS	UWPST	WPST	unclear/other	total
168 (21%)	117 (14.8%)	107 (13.5%)	399	791

Three speakers used (almost) exclusively verb forms with present tense reference. This so-called historical present also occurs in other types of narratives (e.g. anecdotes) and renders the narratives more vivid and lively. One of the three speakers referred back to events that occurred earlier by using an unwitnessed past in his story that otherwise consisted of verbs marked with present tenses (11).

- (11) *haylo uži [...] geni-be-n toł-o hazez,*
 that.OBL boy.ERG pear-PL-and give-PRS them.DAT
- každi-mo-z hessoho-t'a łono geni, łono xexbe*
 every-OBL-DAT one.by.one-DIST three pear, three
 children
- zoq'e-n hagbe*
 be-UWPST they
- ‘The boy gives them three pears, everyone one of the three pears, they were three children.’ (Pear_Sheikh.017)

Three other speakers told the story by using various witnessed past forms. This means that they treated the information that they gained by watching a film on a laptop as directly acquired information and themselves as eyewitnesses of the events.

Finally, three other speakers used (almost) only unwitnessed past forms. This can be explained in two ways: firstly, the speakers treated the information obtained by looking a film (and not personally witnessing the events) as indirectly acquired and therefore required unwitnessed past forms. Secondly, they used the text styles of traditional narratives such as fairy tales and legends. Traditional narratives require the strict use of unwitnessed past forms. They also begin with stereotypical existential or presentational sentences that are fully focused and have VS word order (in contrast to SV word order, which is more frequent in all other clause types):

- (12) (a) *hes zoq'e -n rek'we*
 one be-UWPST man
 ‘There was a man.’ (Pear_Xadzhat.001)
- (b) *zoq'e -n sasaqos*
 be-UWPST morning
 ‘It was in the morning.’ (Pear_Elmira.001)

The other eight speakers, however, showed interesting variation in their use of tense forms. Five speakers began their narration with an unwitnessed past form, typically with a variant of the traditional introductory sentences given in (12 a, b). After a number of clauses they changed to the witnessed past, but after that they usually changed again to the present tense and then used various present tense forms until the end of the story. This seems to indicate that the speakers first employed the traditional narration techniques for fiction which includes the use of unwitnessed past

tenses and the fixed form of the introductory sentences. However, the content and the participants of the Pear story do not correspond to the usual content and characters of traditional stories, so after a short time, the traditional style becomes inadequate. One speaker accompanied the shift from unwitnessed past forms to witnessed past forms with the deictic pronoun *izad* ‘that’, which occurs only in the presence of the referent of the pronoun (e.g. when pointing at the referent) (13). After that she continued with witnessed past forms for a few clauses and then switched back to the unwitnessed past (and finally in the last two clauses to the Simple Present).

- (13) *hoboy Ø-iš'i-yo Ø-iči-n ked nox-o zoq'e-n*
 then I-go-ICVB I-be-CVB girl come-ICVB be-UWPST
- k'onk'a-š'o, haŋu-y haŋo-qo-s šapka y-iy-no*
 bike-SPR she.OBL-ERG he.OBL-AT-ABL1 hat(IV) iv-take-CVB
- izad-šen, hoboy hago q'idir Ø-iš'i-š*
 that-QUOT then he down I-fall-WPST
- ‘Then while he was leaving a girl on a bike came. She took his hat.
 The hat fell down.’ (Pear_Xava.009)

The use of witnessed past forms often extends only to a small number of clauses and shortly after that the speakers switch completely to present tense forms, probably because these forms often occur in the narration of anecdotes and other stories not belonging to the traditional narration type and are therefore neutral with respect to their evidentiality value. Interestingly, none of the speakers switched directly from unwitnessed past forms to present tense forms.

The remaining speakers showed other types of variation. One speaker began with present tenses and on reaching the end of the story switched to the witnessed past. The other speaker switched several times between verb forms with present time reference and those with witnessed past time reference. Finally, one young girl began with witnessed past tenses, literally explaining what she had seen (14). When introducing the three boys she changed to the unwitnessed past and used the simple unwitnessed past until the end of the story.

- (14) *diž b-ike-s čeq, čeq-i rek'we*
 I.DAT HPL-see-WPST forest forest-IN man
 ‘I saw a forest, a man in a forest.’ (Pear_Madi.001)

Since the Pear Stories are mainly monologues there is almost no interaction with the hearer. Only one speaker, who watched the film together with her son, interrupted her narration twice by asking him questions, formulated in the witnessed past, since the speaker knew that her son had seen the film (15 a, b).

- (15) (a) *tohobito-gon* *k'onk'a-λ'o* *Ø-aq'o* *uži*
 on.the.other.side-TOP bike-SPR I-come-PRS boy(I)

Ø-aq'o *zoq'e-ye?*
 I-come-ICVB be-Q.WPST
 'From the other side comes a boy, didn't he come?'
 (Pear_Rukiyat.007)
- (b) *hago q'idi-n* *Ø-iči-n* *Ø-eze-n* *λox-o,*
 he down-and I-sit-CVB I-look-CVB remain-PRS

uryezi.iq-o. *nido haw* *b-iλi?*
 think.I-PRS where that III-go-Q.WPST
 'He remains looking and thinks. Where did it go?' (Pear_Rukiyat.024)

Many speakers were not very consistent in their tense marking in the sense that they switched tenses three or more times during their narration. One example is given in (16). The speaker was unsure about her narration. She made long breaks between the sentences and shifted several times between various verb forms.

- (16) *q'ono kwid* *bak'arzi* *b-u:-s,* *ehm,* *b-u:-n*
 two basket(III) collect III-do-WPST uh III-do-UWPST
 'He gathered two baskets.' (Pear_Rukiyat.004)

5. CONCLUSION

Among the various factors that could possibly influence the expression of information obtained through the media (audio vs. visual, direct vs. indirect, fiction vs. real, etc.) the most important factor is direct vs. indirect. Directly acquired information is always expressed by witnessed past forms, independently of the senses with which it has been obtained. It includes any fully or partially broadcasted and recorded events, even if the speaker sees or hears them only later on. Indirect information, in contrast, is almost exclusively reported by unwitnessed past tenses. With respect to the expression of fictive events, such as films, both witnessed and unwitnessed forms are possible, depending on the style of narration. If speakers switch between tenses, then only switches between witnessed past forms and present tenses and from unwitnessed past forms via witnessed past forms to present tenses have been observed. None of the speakers switched from witnessed to unwitnessed past tenses. Similar switches (from unwitnessed to witnessed past tenses) have been observed in traditional folklore narratives of Hinuq's closest relative Tsez (Comrie & Polinsky 2007). Perhaps those forms that are normally called 'witnessed tenses' do not, in fact, carry any evidential value.

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