
Reviewed by TIMOTHY JOWAN CURNOW, La Trobe University

This volume is a collection of twenty-one papers, originally presented at the 1997 colloquium “Types of evidentiality in Turkic, Iranian and neighbouring languages”. Many of the papers are of great interest to typologists. As with any collection of papers, of course, there is a range of quality, although overall the standard is higher than in many similar collections.

As Bernard Comrie notes in his introductory paper “Evidentials: Semantics and history”, there are differences between this collection and other collections on evidentiality. In particular, as can be gathered from the subtitle, the papers are restricted to discussing evidentiality in a rather vaguely defined “Central Eurasian” area – essentially Turkic and Iranian languages, plus other languages which have probably been in contact with these at some point.

Another difference, at least theoretically, is the definition of evidentiality as “the presentation of a situation by reference to its reception by a conscious subject”. This is a theoretical difference only, in that while this definition is clearly stated in the preface, at the beginning of the introduction, and in some of the papers, only half the papers or less appear to have any idea that this is the definition of the category under discussion. For example, somewhat disconcertingly, immediately following the introduction with its clear statement of evidentiality in these terms, the following paper begins its second paragraph by claiming that “[e]videntiality has to do with the expression in language of the awareness that truth is relative” (Aksu-Koç, p. 15), a not entirely contradictory statement, but equally not one that is easily integrated with the earlier definition. This is probably the weakest point of this collection – it is not entirely clear whether all the various authors are, or believe they are, discussing the same phenomenon. This is of course common in collections of papers; but there is normally not such a strong, clear definition in the introductory material of the phenomenon under consideration.

Having said that, many of the papers provide a wealth of information for typologically oriented linguists, and those interested in language contact. Not only those directly interested in evidentiality either: many of the papers contain highly detailed and clearly expressed descriptions of the verbal systems of languages, usually focussing in particular on aspect and resultativity as well as evidentiality.

Following Comrie’s introduction, the papers are divided into three sections: “Turkic languages” (7 papers), “Iranian languages” (5 papers) and “Other lan-
guage areas” (8 papers; given that the first two sections are genetic groupings, it is not clear why this section should refer to areas rather than families). With the exception of Lazard’s paper, written in French, all papers are in English, although quotes from French and German works are often not translated. Having only one paper not in English gives a slightly odd feel to the book, and it would probably have been better to either have more papers in French or German, or else to have translated Lazard’s paper into English.

The papers in the Turkic languages section all focus on the use of the elements -mlš and ermiš or cognate items in particular languages, and the contrast between these forms and other verbal forms.

The section begins with Ayhan Aksu-Koç’s contribution “Some aspects of the acquisition of evidentials in Turkish”. While this paper is clear and well-argued, in some ways it seems out of place in this collection. First, simply because of its focus on acquisition, quite distinct from other papers. More importantly, however, all other papers on Turkish go to extremes to convince the reader that the suffix -mlš and the clitic -ImIš are entirely distinct items, with different meanings and uses; yet while Aksu-Koç introduces them as distinct, following their introduction they are treated, glossed, and discussed as though one and the same morpheme.

Lars Johanson’s paper “Turkic indirectives” gives a historical overview of the various forms in Turkic languages and their semantic development through time. Éva Ágnes Csató’s “Turkish MIŠ- and IMIŠ- items: Dimensions of a functional analysis” examines some of the uses of the various morphemes in modern Turkish; Christoph Schroeder’s “Between resultative, historical and inferential: Non-finite -mlš forms in Turkish” restricts the discussion, clearly, to non-finite uses. Filiz Kiral’s paper on Khalaj, Astrid Menz’s on Gagauz, and Arienne Dwyer’s on Salar look at cognate forms in other Turkic languages. Kiral’s paper is of interest as a contrast to the others, showing that Khalaj does not have indirective meanings of -mlš; Dwyer’s contribution focusses particularly on how pragmatic factors such as gender and politeness are relevant to the use and frequency of the forms in Salar.

Unlike Turkic languages, where “everyone knows” that the items of interest are the various -mlš forms, Iranian languages have no such morpheme or morphemes. Many of the papers in the Iranian languages section thus have the feel of “how would speakers translate Turkic -mlš sentences into language X?”, with a strong focus on the various forms often labelled as the Perfect. Despite this, many of these papers are probably the most interesting from a typological point of view. Several of them give clear, precise accounts of the entire verb system of various Iranian languages; and many debate one of the most interesting issues in the collection – if a particular form is used to cover both indirective evidential meanings and resultative meanings, how much is this a case of ambiguity, how much of the interpretation arises from the morphology, and
how much from the context, both syntactic and semantic or pragmatic? Is the development of indirective meanings an internal development, or attributable to contact with Turkic languages?

The papers in this section are by Christiane Bulut, Carina Jahani, and John R. Perry, looking at indirectivity in Kurmanji, spoken Modern Persian of Iran, and the Persian of Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan respectively. It also contains Bo Utas’s paper, looking for traces of indirectivity in Classical New Persian texts; and Gilbert Lazard’s more strictly theoretical work on different types of evidentiality, examining this with crosslinguistic data focussing particularly on indirective evidentiality in Iranian languages.

The third section, “Other language areas”, is more diverse in geographical and genetic focus, and to some extent in theoretical focus. Winfried Boeder’s paper on Georgian (Kartvelian), Bo Isaksson’s paper on Hebrew and Arabic (Semitic), Natalia Kozintseva’s paper on Modern Eastern Armenian (Indo-European), Marja Leinonen’s on Komi Zyryan (Eastern Finno-Ugric), Andrej L. Malchukov’s on Tungusic languages, and to some extent Victor A. Friedman’s paper primarily on Balkan Slavic, Balkan Romance, and Albanian, are similar in many respects to the papers in the previous section, examining ways in which indirectivity is expressed in these languages, often with a focus on the Perfect, and with an eye on historical development and the possible effects of language contact.

The other two papers in this section are distinct. Gunilla Gren-Eklund’s paper “Evidentiality and typology: Grammatical functions of particles in Burmese and the early states of Indo-European languages” looks at the use of particles in the expression of various evidential and epistemic meanings in Burmese and early Indo-European languages, and is highly tentative. Anju Saxena’s paper “Evidentiality in Kinnauri”, while fascinating, is perhaps not entirely focussed on the main topic of the collection despite its title, as it examines copulas and auxiliaries in the Tibeto-Burman language Kinnauri (which appear only tangentially related to evidentiality as the term is used in the other papers) and their use in direct, indirect, and free indirect speech, looking at the role that perspective and narrator involvement play in their use.

One element which I found to be desperately missing from this collection is a map. As a non-specialist in the geographical areas discussed, I was often at a loss to know where the languages were spoken. To take an example at random, Bulut’s paper on Kurmanji makes it clear that this is an Iranian language; it is possible to infer that it is spoken by Kurds; its strong contact with Turkish is discussed, so the reader is led to assume that it is spoken in the Kurdish areas of Turkey. But nowhere is this explicitly stated, and this is the case with several of the languages. Given that, as Comrie’s introduction notes, much of the data in this collection is fascinating in terms of language contact phenomena, a map would give the general reader a much better ability to compare the lan-
guages in the region, know where they are spoken, and which languages they are geographically close to, at least.

This book has much to recommend to typologists. At the core of the book are descriptions of evidentiality, particularly indirectives, in a range of languages. Often in descriptions of evidentiality we simply have single labels rather than analysis. In this book, we have a series of descriptions of cognate morphemes in Turkic languages, allowing a comparison of the similarities and differences between uses of various forms which have obviously developed historically from one proto-form. Equally, the different uses of the Perfect and similar morphology can be seen across a range of Iranian and other languages, and compared to the Turkic phenomena. These in-depth analyses allow us to see how clearly related phenomena, all of which can be grouped under the term “indirective evidentiality”, differ from language to language, often in very subtle ways.

Those interested in evidentiality, language contact, aspect, verbal systems, Turkic languages, and Iranian languages, at the very least, will find much to contemplate and draw upon in this book.

Correspondence address: Research Centre for Linguistic Typology, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria 3086, Australia; e-mail: T.Curnow@latrobe.edu.au


Reviewed by GARY HOLTON, Alaska Native Language Center

With this seminal book Rice has amassed data from a range of Athapaskan languages to provide a comprehensive picture of the structure of the Athapaskan verb. As the title indicates, the author’s primary purpose is to expound a hypothesis, developed over many years, regarding the nature of word formation in the Athapaskan verb. Rice indeed presents a compelling argument that morpheme order within the verb complex can be predicted based on semantic principles of scope, obviating the need for a template, which is assumed in most previous approaches (for example, Kari 1989). But the book’s title and its attendant hypothesis may obscure the enormous typological value of the work. A quick glance at Appendix 2 (pp. 406–408) provides a nice entry point for the typologist. Here Rice provides a family tree listing 44 Athapaskan languages, 20 of which are exemplified in the text. Indeed, data is included from just about every Athapaskan language for which adequate morphological