Tense in Nganasan narratives[1]

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Abstract

The main objective of the study is to categorize the use of verb tenses in Nganasan personal narratives. The study is corpus-based, with texts found in the annotated Nganasan Spoken Language Corpus (Brykina et al. 2018). The motivation of the study is to describe the various and complicated system of TAME categories in Nganasan. The analysis proves that a relation of the use of past tense and perfective aorist and their role in the storytelling may be motivated by ethnosyntactic factors. An ethnosyntactic base can be detected behind the use of the aorist – but full-fledged proof of this requires further investigation, into notions such as the "value" of time in the Nganasan culture. It seems that in the use of the aorist the prominence of the present moment and real-time of life is reflected. Labov's oral narrative structure description is applied to the Nganasan narratives as well. The research focuses on the relation of the beginning and the main parts, i.e. the Abstract/Orientation and Complicating Action. In Nganasan stories, we find sequences: typical beginnings and segments. These are well reflected in the tense of the foreground. A relevant part of the foreground can be the utterances of the characters that belong to the mainline. The two main strategies are the use of past tense and perfective aorist. It means that there are two basic story-telling temporal frames: perfective aorist and general past tense. The first one is more typical in the folklore genres. These two strategies can be combined with narrative/reportative evidentiality. Several aspects play a role in the "choice" of tense, one of the most important being the role of the speaker and their relationship to the story. This is well reflected, for example, between the introductory parts (Abstract and Orientation) and the dominant tense of the main story-line (Complicating action).

Keywords: Nganasan, tense, evidentiality

1 Introduction
There is a long tradition of the study of tense in texts (e.g. Kamp and Rohrer 1983, Kiefer 1983, Gvozdanovic and Janssen 1991, Partee 1984), but there are no similar activities in the study of the "smaller" Uralic languages. In this paper my approach is basically text-level on the one hand, and it focuses on

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one of the smallest Uralic languages, the Nganasan language on the other. The motivation and objectives of the paper can be summarized as follows (1.1–1.4).

1.1 Tense, aspect, mood, evidentiality and perspectivity

In the focus of the research stand the TAME categories from the point of view of perspectivity, which refers here to the story-teller's viewpoint and his/her relation to the temporal frame of the story. In this paper, I concentrate mainly on the use of tense markers of the Nganasan language. The main questions are, first, what the basic distinctions of different types of the special Nganasan tense markers in narratives are; second, how the "choice" of the tense markers is affected by the perspective/viewpoint of the story-teller/speaker; third, what type of a relation exists between the speaker and the propositions; and finally, what the role of morphological evidentiality is in narrative texts.

1.2 Narratological/textological approach (cohesion): narrative per-spectivization

Following up on the abovementioned objectives, my approach basically is narratological and textological. Such supra-textual but linguistically motivated analyses are not typical in the field of the small Uralic languages. Furthermore, there are a few analyses that take into account the circumstances of the recordings/presentations, and the fundamentally oral nature of the texts under study. The combination of the discourse-based analysis of perspectivization and analysis of reported speech constructions from the point of view of TAME categories can be fruitful as a new area in the research of the Samoyedic languages.

1.3 External motivation in the use/development of TAME categories.

In general, the base of my research questions is ethnosyntactic in nature: in a broader sense, I am looking for external factors that induce change in grammatical (sub)systems (such as cultural, cognitive, and contact-induced effects). It is a well-known fact that the category of tense/aspect is less culturally sensitive than evidentiality. In my earlier papers (Szeverényi 2020) I demonstrated – confirming Bernárdez' hypothesis (Bernárdez 2017) – that the development of the more complex evidential systems can be motivated by external factors, e.g. the geographic environment. In other papers I provided an example from the Samoyed languages for lexicon–grammar interaction: the perception and expression of TIME can be motivated by environmental factors as well (Szeverényi 2010, 2012). Nganasan has a special tense/aspect system in the sense that, for instance, there is no (unmarked) deictic present tense but e.g. there is a suffixal deictic future tense and an elaborated evidential system. An important research question is how these two complicated subsystems work in narratives.

1.4 Temporal in personal stories

The temporal structure of a text can be analyzed from several points of view. The use of temporal adverbials, the role of tenses, the contribution of verb meanings to the time structure, etc. can be examined. From both a perspectivizational and narratological point of view, the question is whether the differences of narrative strategy can be established between text types. This means a "choice" of the TAME category for the present study. The Nganasan Spoken Language Corpus is suitable for such an investigation (see section 3), as the corpus is represented by several genres from multiple speakers. Nevertheless, I must emphasize that my findings are based on the language corpus. In this study, I examine mainly non-folkloric texts but provide also references to the peculiarities of folkloric texts.

2 The Nganasan language and its corpus

Nganasan belongs to the Samoyedic branch of Uralic languages. The Nganasan language is spoken in Northern Siberia on the Taimyr Peninsula. Two dialects of Nganasan are distinguished, they are mutually intelligible. Nganasan is an agglutinating language with a high degree of fusion and complex morphophonology. Verbs are inflected for tense and mood and agree in person and number with their subjects. There are three types of conjugation: subjective, objective, and reflexive. If the clause has an object which is known from the context (but not necessarily expressed lexically), the verb agrees in number also with the object, thus taking the verbal ending of the objective conjugation set (e.g. Wagner-Nagy 2019, among others). The mood system is very rich, there are twelve moods (including an elaborate system of evidential forms). Nouns are inflected for number, case, and possessivity. There are three grammatical cases and four local/adverbial cases. Local and other adverbial meanings can be expressed by several postpositions. Nganasan is a nominative-accusative language, the word order is relatively free, i.e. partially depending on information structure, even though there is a tendency in unmarked sentences to exhibit an SOV order.

This study is corpus-based. The examples used here are taken from a former version of the *Nganasan Spoken Language Corpus*[2] (Brykina et al. 2018). The corpus consists of fieldwork materials collected by several scholars and contains folklore texts, narratives (everyday stories, biographies, etc.), songs as well as spontaneous and stimulated conversations. Examples are coded, e.g. as [XYZ_year_title of text.number of the sentence], where XYZ stands for the code of the speaker. (In this paper, the number of the sentence will be before the sentences.) In this study, I have adapted both the glosses and the translations.

(For more about the corpus, see Wagner-Nagy & Szeverényi 2015 or Wagner-Nagy et al. 2018.) In this study, a narrative subcorpus of NSLC was analyzed. It consists of 56 texts from 19 speakers. They are typically oral, spontaneous, monologic narratives (sometimes including an interaction with another speaker). The following narrative types can be distinguished:

(1) narrative of a single event based on the speaker's own experience, e.g. travel, childhood experiences, family, etc.

(2) narrative of a single event told by others, typically a story about a deceased close relative,

(3) narrative of descriptive, regular, recurring events (e.g. how to sew a parka, how to build a tent, etc.),

(4) narrative of remote past events.

Folkloric narratives and songs were excluded from the subcorpus due to their possible specific and genre-dependent characteristics. However, as a control subcorpus, I analyzed a selected small part of folklore texts (flkd = texts belonging to the genre of Dyurimi), the so-called Dyaiku stories, a story type of the Nganasan trickster, a popular protagonist of Nganasan folklore (8 texts).

3 Perspective and TAME in Nganasan

The Nganasan tense system of narratives cannot be analyzed independently of the other three verbal inflectional categories: evidentiality, mood, and aspect (TAME categories). Moods, evidentials, and tense/aspect markers are in interaction with each other in many cases. It is safe to say that the role of the speaker imposes some constraints: it is fundamentally relevant whether the speaker evokes the events from his/her point of view or the point of view of another actor or whether s/he does not mark his/her relation to the events. The actual speaker's perspective is the default in narratives: the story is always told from the actual (or original) speaker's perspective. The original speaker's perspective is reflected in direct quotations as well: in the Nganasan language, there are no shifts in quotations. Furthermore, there is a special vehicle of the marking of the speaker's perspective in folklore texts that proves the salience of the perspectivity: it is the so-called *ŋaala*, the "Mouth" (lit. 'mouth-only', from *ŋaŋ* 'mouth'). The "Mouth" appears as a narrator when the scene/place of the story is changed when typically the characters enter from the open-air scene into a closed place (mostly tent/chum). The role of this metanarrator is to mark the non-eyewitness perspective from the point of view of the story-teller (as the story-teller could not see what happened inside).

3.1 Tense system in Nganasan

The Nganasan tense system has some unique features (Table 1). Among the Uralic languages, Nganasan is the only language where there is no unmarked deictic present tense on the one hand, and there is a suffixal future tense, on

the other. There are three future tenses: a general, an immediate, and a so-called future-in-the-past. A deictic general past tense exists, and there is a past tense that seems to be a relative tense. In Nganasan, we find the "aorist" or neutral tense that is a characteristic feature of the Samoyedic languages. It is used "instead" of the present tense (or in other words, the imperfective aorist has present value) but the Nganasan aorist differs from the other Samoyedic languages in that in Nganasan the imperfective and the perfective verbs are morphologically in the aorist. This is the reason why the tense system in itself is interesting and justifies the question of what and how tense markers appear in the Nganasan narrative texts as a tool for cohesion, i.e., what tense choice strategies can be established.

conjugation type		aorist		past		future		
		perf.	imperf.	general	plusperf.	general	imme-diate	fut. in the past
Subj.		-ʔa/-ʔə	-NTU	-SUə	-SUəďəə	-ʔsUTə	-ʔkə	-ʔsUTəďəə
Obj.	1 obj	-ʔa/-ʔə	-NTU	-SUə	-SUəďəə	-ʔsUTə	-ʔkə	-ʔsUTəďəə
	2 obj.	-ʔa/-ʔə	-NTU	-SUə	-SUəďəə	-ʔsUTə	-ʔkə	-ʔsUTəďəə
	more than 2 obj.	-ʔi/-ʔia͡	-NTA1	-SÜÜ	-SUəďəi	-ʔSÜTÜ	-ʔkə	-ʔSÜTÜďəi
Refl.		-ʔi/-ʔia͡	-NTA1	-SÜÜ	-SUəďəi	-ʔSÜTÜ	-ʔkə	-ʔSÜTÜďəi

Table 1. Tense markers in Nganasan (Wagner-Nagy 2019: 234)

As we will see, the general past tense and the perfective aorist tense are used mostly in narratives.[3] One could say that the perfective aorist refers to the immediate past, the imperfect aorist to the present, but that would a deictic tense-central explanation. What I argue for is that the real value of aorist cannot be described in this way.

All verbs have an aspectual value, the lexical aspect determining the suffixation in aorist (neutral) tense, and the temporal meaning of the verb. Two sets of verbs exist based on aspectual value: perfective and imperfective verbs. The majority of Nganasan verbs are perfective without any formal sign of perfectivity (Wagner-Nagy 2019). Personal suffixes are not attached to the stem directly in the aorist tense: a so-called co-affix (an aorist marker) is attached to the stem, and personal suffixes follow this affix. The form of the affix depends on the aspect of the verb. The aorist tense is not deictic. Its time value depends upon the inherent aspect of the verb. While perfective verbs refer to

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[3] Plungian and Urmanchieva (2015) discussed the aorist and past tense in Enets from a functional point of view.

the immediate past, imperfective verbs refer to the present in the aorist tense. The exact distribution and functional description of the aorist and past tense has not been done yet.

3.2 Evidentiality system and tense

Nganasan evidentiality is a well-known and widely analyzed system of the language, thanks mainly to the works of Gusev (2007) and Wagner-Nagy (2019). In brief, the Nganasan evidential system distinguishes the following types of sources:

       (1) the direct source (eye-witnessed),
       (2) inferential,
       (3) sensitive (auditive),
       (4) reportative (renarrative, quotative).

The direct source can be labeled as indicative, or, from the point of view of evidentiality, neutral category. The sensitive/auditive rarely occurs in narratives and is not the part of verbal inflection: it is a nominal form followed by possessive suffixes.

In the case of the marked verbal (inferential and reportative) evidentials there is no bounded tense suffix in the inflected word. The tense values of the inferential and reportative are questionable, but the reportative has analytic forms in past tense and perfective aorist (where the evidential suffix is attached to the copula). It suggests that the reportative and inferential form has general temporal value.

3.3 Mood and tense

The evidential system has been often discussed as a part of the system expressing mood, however, evidentiality seems to be a separate category from the category of mood: it is a deictic category, or at least evidentials fulfill deictic functions. Altogether 12 moods are distinguished in Nganasan (Wagner-Nagy 2019: 242) that express epistemic or deontic modality, as well as the two verbal evidentials (inferential and reportative). The reason is that it is difficult to separate the evidential from epistemic moods, especially in the case of inferential evidential and epistemic moods. Of course, beside the moods there are other languages means to express epistemic modality, e.g. epistemic adverbials and particles. Epistemic markers typically do not appear in sentences containing evidentials, and epistemic adverbials also rarely appear in such sentences. There is one evidential (sensitive) in which the verb mood cannot arise because of its word-type nature, since it creates a nominal form. As has been mentioned above, all inflected finite verbal forms are marked in Nganasan, however, the indicative has no marker of its own (but all tenses are marked).

4 Narrative elements

As has been mentioned in the introduction, in this study I focus only on personal narratives where the narrator has a special relation to the events of the story: it is about the speaker's own or the speaker's friends' and relatives' experience, or it is told by one of the narrator's close relatives, typically parents or grandparents. With these constraints, we could exclude the possible "folkloric" narratives on the one hand, and narratives "without a story" (e.g. the type of "how to do something, e.g. build a tent, sew a parka" etc.) on the other. This distinction is important for two reasons: we can get closer to understanding the chronological and structural organization of the personal stories, and the use of reportative/renarrative evidential could help to determine the relation of the events and the speaker in the light of tense marking.

In my analysis, I will apply, following Lee's 2020 approach, Labov's model of oral narratives. I focus on the temporal cohesion of the parts of such narratives. Labov (1972) identified as the components of an oral narrative the abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result, and coda. A schematic representation of the organization of a narrative is as follows (the left-to-right order reflects the flow of time):

(Abstract)   Orientation   (Coda)

Complicating action &   Result
Evaluation
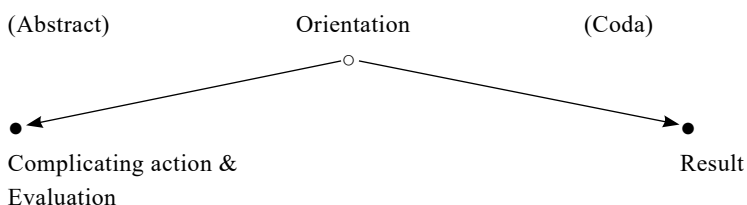
Figure 1. Narrative organization (Lee 2020: 15)
black dots = foreground; white dot = background.

The definitions of the components (Lee 2020: 15):

(1) Abstract and Orientation are optional elements. They are introductory and concluding remarks: the resolution of the complicating action, which is the ultimate goal and purpose of the narrative. (What was this about? Who, when, what, where?)

(2) Complicating action: the nucleus of the narrative, composed of episodes. (What happened?)

(3) Evaluation: concurrent with complicating actions, which can recursively create more than one episode. It refers to the explanations and commentary on complicating actions described in episodes.

(4) Result or Resolution: What finally happened?

(5)Coda: It prevents any further questions regarding the story events.

In this paper, I analyze components 1–3 because they illustrate well some temporal characteristics of narratives on the one hand, and, because components 4–6 are not typical in Nganasan narratives, on the other.

Labov (1972: 362) distinguishes between two types of clauses within the skeleton of the narrative: narrative clauses and free clauses. A narrative clause is a "temporally ordered clause". A free clause is a clause that is not "confined in a temporal juncture". It is free in a sense that is moveable; it can be moved anywhere in the story. Furthermore, it has been argued that clauses in narrative texts can be divided into two categories, foreground, and background. The basis of the distinction is their discourse function (Labov 1972). These terms (foreground and background) are from Hopper (1979), and Labov uses the term narrative clause for foreground information that can be found in a series of temporally ordered event clauses (this is the so-called "skeleton" or "actual story-line" or mainline). The free clauses (Labov 1972; background in Hopper 1979) are any number of clauses that elaborate, evaluate, or comment on the narrated main events" and they "can come between two narrative clauses" (or "supportive material") (Lee 2020: 13). Narrative organization background information is necessary to understand and interpret the story, such as the characters and setting. A short narrative can be a single episode, but narratives typically contain a number of different episodes.[4]

5 Tense in narratives

One of the main characteristic features of narratives is the temporal relations matching the clausal order (Lee 2020: 7). There is a fundamental processing difference that exists between narrative and non-narrative discourse types. The deictic function of tense in the everyday use of language is lost in narrative genres. The tense has an anaphoric role in this case:

> "… in narratives, the tense refers to a time that is extracted from the previous discourse, similar to the use of pronouns such as he, she, himself, and herself (Partee 1984). In non-narratives (e.g. conversation), the relationship between the discourse and the actual world is more direct than in the case of narratives. Non-narratives are organized with respect to the immediate speech context that the speaker and hearer

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[4] Lee cites plenty of definitions for episodes (Lee 2020: 15): "According to van Dijk (1981: 177), 'episodes are characterized as coherent sequence of sentences of a discourse, linguistically marked for beginning, and/or end, and further defined in terms of identical participants, time, location, or global event or action.'" Similarly, Chafe (1987: 42) draws an episode boundary where there is a "significant change in scene, time, character configuration, event structure, and the like." At each episode boundary, there is a change in all of these, making each episode a self-contained whole in terms of setting and characters as well as thematic consistency. Fabb (1997) discusses different linguistic forms indicating episode boundaries, such as connectives and a shift in tense. Using Chafe's (1987) criteria of significant change in location, time, character, and event structure for the division of episodes".

share, informing the hearer of significant recent events. Therefore, in non-narratives, whose most prominent context equals the utterance context, the tense indicates the temporal relationship between the event time and the utterance time." (Lee 2020: 63)

Lee (2020: 63) also mentions that "[a] common assumption in the linguistic studies of narratives is that the tense in narratives is anchored to the narrator, while other indexical expressions are anchored to a character".

This is because tense is still treated as a deictic category relating the event time with the production time of the narrative. The past tense in narratives, for instance, is seen as a genuine past tense marker indicating that the described event occurred before the time of the production of the narrative, contrary to the common assumption that tense is anchored to the narrator whose referential domain remains at the utterance time. The past tense is typically used in narratives but it does not necessarily indicate that the described events occurred before the speech/production time. It is irrelevant for written fictional narratives (Lee 2020: 67). In personal oral narratives (Labov 1972), where the recounted events actually happened before the time of telling, the narrator situates him/herself directly in the referential domain of the story context, telling the story following the chronological order, and often using the so-called 'historical present'. As Abbott (2008: 51) argues, "[i]nsofar as it is narrated, any story is an act of mediation and construction, and this includes the entities that are meant to represent real people." Present (or even future tense) narratives are also common, in which case they do not indicate that the described events are concurrent with the production time" Lee 2020: 67).

6 Markers of tense in foreground and background

The foreground and background in the narrative have to be differentiated. The following patterns seem to be tendencies, not rigid rules because the use of a certain tense suffix can depend on many external factors as well, e.g. the speaker's language knowledge, the circumstances of the recording, etc.

6.1 Foreground: typical dominant TAME suffixes in story-telling

In Nganasan narratives, based on the NSLC narrative subcorpus, the following TAME can be established in the foreground:

      (1) general past tense
      (2) perfective aorist
      (3) narrative evidential
      (4) general past tense + narrative evidential
      (5) perfective aorist + narrative evidential
      (6) iterative suffix + imperfective aorist

In addition to the cases in (1)–(6), the direct reported speech construction,
the direct quotation can contain foreground information that is told from the
perspective of the original speaker (the characters of the story). In many texts,
the rate of quotation is relatively high, namely, many narrative texts have a
conversation-like structure, however, the quoted sentences can contain back-
ground information as well. The marking and rate of quoted sentences are
similar to the folklore genres. The quoted sentences can be marked in various
ways. The marking of quoted sentences can happen with the finite form of a
speaking verb, typically the aorist form of *munu-* ’say’, and/or with the discourse
particle *Ou!* ‘ah’, or with intonation, for instance:

(1)   *Tətirə   maðajt’ü-tuə*   *taharȋaa*   *təti*
        that   be.neighbour-PTCP.PRS   well   that
        D’orakuə   munu-baŋhu
        Dyorakuo   say-NARR.3SG
        ‘He came to visit Djorakuo and Djorakuo said:
        Ou,   taharȋaa   maðajt’ütə-mə   *tuu-Ɂə*
        Ah   well   be.neighbour-1SG   arrive-PF.3SG
        təɁ.
        well
        “Ah, I have a guest now.”’
        (TKF_990823_Dolgans_nar.2–3)

Indirect reported speech with shifts is a very rare phenomenon. It occurs in
the speech of the newer recordings with or without a complementizer, such
as the following:

(2)   *ŋətum-hiɁə-mə*   *n’eɁə-mə*   **munu-ŋkə-suə**[5],
        birth-NMLZ-1SG   mother-1SG   say-ITER-PST.3SG
        *mənə   ŋətum-**siə**-m*   *martə*   *mes’acə-tənu.*
        I   appear-PST-1SG.S   March.GEN   month-LOC
        ‘My mother said that I was born in March.’
        (ASS_161024_Life_nar .4)

The use of tenses in many cases follows the structure of the narrative. The
tense applied in the introductory elements can differ from the tense of com-
pilation, because the introduction can contain metadata that is not part of the
main storyline, and these parts are of a more deictic nature (e.g. where and
when the story-teller heard the story, etc.). The exact difference between the

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[5] The tense markers are highlighted.

perfective aorist and past tense is not clear in all cases, but some tendencies can be established.

6.2 Background

Besides the previously mentioned tenses, background information can be marked in the following ways:
(1) Non-finite forms.
(2) Future tense, relative past tenses.
(3) Nominal predicates.
(4) Direct quotation.

If there is a rigid temporal frame in a story, the background information can be expressed by one of the other main "strategies" in the following way:

If the foreground is: the background (suppletive information) can be:
PAST   PAST + NARRATIVE
PERF. AORIST   PERF. AORIST + NARRATIVE

If the mainline is told in general past or perfective aorist, the backgrounding information is often in the narrative evidential. There are examples of mixed narrating when the marking of the narrator's perspective depends on the temporal strategy.

The next sequence is an example of "Foreground: PAST and Background: PAST+NARR" (ASS_161024_Life_nar). In this text, the speaker does not change the tense, but she changes the evidential scope: the speaker determines the source of information in all propositions. In the second sequence (from 8–9 to the end of the text, the speaker speaks about her own birth and childhood and distinguishes events she may have remembered from those that she did not. Sentence (8–9) seems to be deviant, but here she just repeats an event (her own birth), and maybe the focus is on the date of the birth, not on the event itself. As can be seen, PAST+NAR describes circumstances and provides supportive information (4–5 and 6). The two main events of this segment are that (i) she was born in March, and (ii) she went to school in Volochanka. Evindentiality plays a role here as well: in the first utterance, the speaker determines her source (her mother), so all evidential forms (from 6 to 10) have a quotative function. In (11) the speaker uses past tense without evidential because she remembers the school.

(ASS_161024_Life_nar)
(1) Abstract and Orientation
…

(4–5)   *ŋətumhiʔəmə n'eʔəmə mununk̲ə̲-**suə**, mənə ŋətum-**siə**-m martə
mes'acətənu.*
Tərul'a kit'əðəətənu.   FG   PST
'My mother said that I was born in March.'

(6)   *Təti tahari͡aa ŋətum-**siə**-m i-**bahu** ŋanuə maðaŋku kun'd'i.*
                                                  BG   PST+NARR
'I was born in a small tent, it is said.'

(7)   *ŋanuə maðaŋku mel'i-**d'ii**-ðə i-**bahu**.*   BG   PST+NARR
'A small tent was built, it is said.'

(2) Complicating action
(8–9)   *Təti tahari͡aa ŋanuə matənu mənə ŋətum-**siə**-m. Tərul'a
kit'əðəətənu.*   BG!   PST
'In this tent I was born. At the end of March.'

(10)   *Təni tahari͡aa n'emɨgəin'ə büü-**d'üi**-ti i-**bahu** Volot'ankə n'ii d'a.*
                                                  BG/FG! PST+NARR
'Then my parents went to Volochanka.'

(11)   *Volot'ankətənu mənə školatənu hoðətə-**suə**-m.*
                                                  FG   PST
'I studied in school in Volochanka.'
…

6.3 Examples of the temporal strategies on the level of foreground information:

I illustrate the abovementioned lists (in 6.1) with three examples. The first text is dominated by past tense (6.3.1), the second by perfective aorist (6.3.2) and then come the iterative + aorist (6.3.3). In the third one, a narrative/narrative past can be identified (6.3.4), the final text is an example for the mixed strategy (6.3.5).

6.3.1 General past tense

In this narrative, there is no difference between the first element (Abstract and Orientation) and Complicating Action. The first element is very short, only one sentence (1), the second sentence is a description of the subject, and, in the third sentence, the narrator makes explicit the source of the story: his father (3). The verbal predicates of these sentences are in the past tense. The fourth

predicate is in aorist: it introduces the story – the verb of speaking is in aorist in this function, and then, when the father begins the story itself, the narrator uses the general past tense. The difference between (3) and (4) is that the first one is the part of the story as a concrete speech event (past tense), while in (4), the narrator only refers to the father as the source.

KECh_080224_Idol_nar
(1) Abstract and Orientation

(1)	*Miŋ təi-**s'üə** kojkəmuʔ.*	FG	PST
	'We had an idol.'		
(2)	*Kojkəmuʔ i-**s'üə** hu͡alə, d'üjhu͡akaʔa hu͡alə.*	BG	PST
	'This idol was a stone, a round stone.'		
(3)	*Mənə id'aʔanə d'a munu-**d'üə**-m:*	MN/FG	PST
	'I said to my father:		
	*Maagətə…, kuni ŋətə-**d'üəd'əə**-rə tətihu͡alə, …kojkəmuʔʔ*	BG	(DQ)
	'Where have you found this stone, our idol?"		

(2) Complicating action

(4)	*Id'aʔamə munu-**ntu**:*	MN	AOR
	'My father says:		
(5)	*Manüiʔ hü͡atini mənə d'ügu-**su͡ə**-m.*	FG	PST
	"One day I got lost…"		
	…		

6.3.2 Perfective aorist

Statistically, the perfective aorist is a more frequent strategy in the corpus than the general past tense, but in many cases, the Abstract and Orientation elements occur in the past tense. The next narrative has 4 parts. In the first sentence, the narrator gives some metadata – the speaker determines his relation to the events. The source of the information (the story) is the speaker's close relative: it was told by his father. The verb of speaking stands in the past tense, not in the aorist. The second part (2) contains some basic information about WHO, WHERE, and WHAT (the narrator and his brother, making poles, at river Ko-tuj). Such a short introduction – Abstract and Orientation – is typical. In Part 3, the plot itself, the complication begins. The temporal frame of this element has more variation possibilities in general. In this text, the aorist indicates the

beginning. The perfective aorist holds the cohesion of the story, which is also important because another feature of Nganasan storytelling appears in this narrative: the alternating direct quotes.

(SEN_061025_Moose_nar)
(1) Abstract and Orientation

(1)   *D'esɨmə d'ebtu-**d'üə** tərəd'i kərsu.*   PAST
         'My father told me such a story.'

(2)   *Manu numaŋku ihüʔətu, ŋad'atunanu d'oðür-**s'üə**-gəj ŋüül'əmuj,*
         hu͡aaðit'i huursɨ   PAST
         'When he was young, he went with his brother to make tent poles.'

(3)   *Təə t'uhənɨ n'ilɨ-**d'iə**-gəj Kotujbikaa nanu.*   PAST
         'At that time, they lived not far from the river Kotuj.'

(2) Complicating action

(4)   *Təti kona-**ʔa**-gəj muŋkuʔ d'a ŋüt'it'i lətitəʔhĩasɨ.*   FG   PF
         'They went into the forest to make tent poles.'

(5)   *Kuə hirəgüəj ŋüt'it'i lətɨd'i, hursəʔki-**ʔa**-gəj maðuti d'a.*
                                                                    FG   PF
         'They made some poles and went home.'

(6)   *Təgətə lakarɨarĩaiʔ maagüə saü d'indi-**ʔə**-gəj.*   FG   PF
         'Then, suddenly they heard a noise.'

(7)   *Tətirə kəujkĩa heðiti-**hĩaði**.*   BG   (EVID)
         'It seemed it was a moose.'

(8)   *N'inɨbtiʔĩa munu-**ntu**:*   MN   AOR
         Kat'əmə-tə, takəə kəujkĩa.   (DQ: IMP)
         'The elder brother said: "See that moose."'

(9)   *Ərəkərə kəujkĩa, ŋamtüt'üəu t'aðuməu!*   (DQ: NOM)
         'A beautiful moose, with such huge antlers!'

(10)   *Ŋad'əum hɨɨmsɨ munu-**ntu**:*   MN   AOR
         'The younger brother, frightened, said:'

(11) *Hil'i-**ti**-mə.*   (DQ: AOR)
      'I'm scared.'

(12) *Kəujk͡ia mi hu͡arubütü kuniʔia mej-**s'iðə**-mi?*   DQ   FUT
      'If the moose attacks us, what will we do?'

(13) *Tuu biðikəl'it'əmtə n'i-**hi͡aði**-ŋ n'akələʔ.*   DQ   INF
      'You didn't even take a gun with you.'

(14) *N'inibtiʔi͡a munu-**ntu**:*   MN   AOR
      'The elder brother says:'

(15) *N'intə hil'id'əʔ!*   DQ   IMP
      'Don't be afraid!'

(16) *Kəujk͡ia ŋonəntu büü-**s'üði**-ʔ.*   DQ   FUT
      'The moose will go away on its own.'

(17) *Siðirhəbtə kəujk͡ia kantu-**ʔi**-ðə muŋkuʔ d'erə.*   FG   PF
      'The moose, indeed, disappeared in the forest.'
      …

6.3.3 Iterative and aorist

The speaker describes the basic circumstances in (1): the place (a camp around the settlement), the time (the speaker's childhood), the regularity of events and characters (the speaker's parents). The regularity – not referring a concrete date and place – is expressed with ***kə-tu*** that is the combination of the iterative derivational suffix and the imperfective aorist suffix. The predicate of the second and the third sentence is also in iterative-imperfective combination referring to recurring and habitual events (going to school, travelling to Kresty in spring). The gerund form is based on the perfective aorist marker (*-hüʔə*). (4) is the first sentence of the main events. This is the beginning of the story, referring to a concrete scene and time.

(ChND_041213_Reminiscence_nar)
(I) Abstract and Orientation
(1)   *S'ürüd'a miŋ d'esigəj, d'ed'iniʔ, n'eminiʔ təi-hüʔə, n'üə i-hüʔ-əmuʔ,*
      *s'ürüd'aa mal'ü-**kə-tu**-muʔ koruðuʔ kad'ani.*   BG ITER-AOR
      'When our parent were alive and we were children,
      our nomad camp stood near the settlement.'

(2)   *S'ürü bəimənɨ hoðətə-**gə-tu**-muʔ, hoðətətuə n'üə i-hüʔ.*
                                                              BG ITER-AOR
       'We went to school in winter, we were students.'

(3)   *Taharì͡abiʔ kaŋgəu norumhüʔ, huuʔu͡a, norud'aa miŋ*
       *suəd'ü-**gə-tu**-muʔ*   BG ITER-AOR
       Kiristəu t'übə, taatini.
       'When spring came, that time we wandered with reindeer to Kresty.'

(II) Complicating the action

(4)   *Ŋuəlɨ miŋ suəd'ü-**suə**-muʔ, mi ŋahunə nanu, Sod'anə nanu, əlɨgakumi*
       *i-**s'üə**-mi,*   FG   PST
       'We wandered also, of course, with my sister Zoya, we were small,'
       *t'enɨgüə-**ti**-n'ə mənə.*   BG   AOR
       'I remember that.'

(5)   *suəd'üʔmuə-**d'əi**-n'üʔ*   FG   PST
       'We wandered with the reindeer.'
       …

6.3.4 Narrative and narrative past

The speaker consistently maintains the narrative / reportative evidential until
the end of the story (mostly with past tense). In the first sentence, the speaker
indicates the source of the story (hearsay, not a concrete person), the place
(where the Nenets people live). In the second sentence, we get the name of
the central form of the narrative. These are typical introductory elements. The
third piece of information is about his circumstances (a farmer and his wife).
From the point of view of tense markers, there are no parts of the texts in the
first parts, but later the speaker changes tense and evidentials almost sentence
by sentence. In (7) an epistemic particle (*əku* 'probably') occurs that is quite
rare in similar texts. The utterance is about the speaker's own but old experi-
ence – so the particle expresses uncertainty.

(ChND_061105_Nenets_nar)
(I) Abstract and Orientation

(1)   *Əmtɨ i-**s'üə** i-**bahu** d'ürakiʔ n'iini.*   BG   PST+EVID
       'This has happened where the Nenets people live, it is said.'

(2)   *Voroncovo koruðuʔ t'erə, t'erə i-**s'üə** i-**bahu**.*
                                                        BG/FG PST+EVID
       'He was a dweller of the village of Voroncovo.'

(3)   *Təni?i͡ajhü? sitiŋ taatini it'üə i-s'üə-gəj i-bahu, nisəd'əgəj.*

                                                                              BG   PST+EVID

        'It is said, they were there with reindeer, a man and his wife.'

(4)   *Bəjka?atu nanu tu-s'üə-gəj i-bahu koruðu? d'a, tamtu?kənagəndi.*

                                                                                   BG   PST+EVID

        'With her husband, she went shopping into the village.'

(5)   *Əliga?ku n'üəði təi-s'üə i-bahu, labs'ü?ta?ku.*

                                                                                 BG   PST+EVID

        'It is said, they had got a little child, in a cradle.'

(6)   *Əə, ŋabubta?a n'üəði hoðətə-suə i-bahu, təbtə əliga?ku.*

                                                                             BG   PST+EVID

        'The elder child (daughter) was a student, it is said, she was also small.'

(7)   *Pervij kalasə i-s'üə əku.*   BG   PST + EP

        'Probably it was the first grade.'

(II) Complicating Action

(8)   *Tə, koruti? tuu-?ə-gəj, tamtu?ki-?ə-gəj.*   BG   PF

        'Well, they arrived in the village, they did the shopping.'

(9)   *N'üənti maaŋaləðəj n'akələ-siə-gəj i-bahu, kənhiətə?, pet'ən'i?.*

                                                                            FG   PST+EVID

        'They bought, it is said, candy and cookies for the children.'

(10)   *Büü?ki-?i-ti, maðuti d'a büü?ki-?i-ti.*   FG   PF

        'They go away, they go home.'

(11)   *Əliga?ku n'üə?küti təti hoðətənda?ku, hüəti? siti tən'ərikə-bi͡aŋhi,*
       d'orəŋaləkə-bahu.   BG   EVID

        'The little girl, the one who studies, ran after the others, she cried, it is said.'

(12)   *Ŋansə nənsud'i <u>munu-baŋhu</u> n'üə?kütü d'a:*

                                                              FG   EVID

        'He stopped and told his child'

        N'ükü, koniŋkəəŋ, in't'ərnaatətə d'a koni-?.

                                                             FG   DQ (FUT)

        'Little child, go to the boarding school!'

(13)   *Mi ŋonəiʔ tu-**s'üðə**-mi.*   FG   DQ (FUT)
       'We will arrive.'

(14)   *Tə, n'üəʔküti bii-**ʔia** in't'ərnaatətu d'a.*   FG   PF
       'Well, the little child went to the boarding school.'

(15)   *Siti tahar͡iaiʔ bii-**ʔia**-indi səd'əəməninti.*   FG   PF
       'They went to their home.'

(16)   *Iniʔ͡iaʔkumtu tətirə bət͡iaʔ-**hüaŋhu**.*   FG/BG   EVID
       'He was leading his wife.'

(17)   *N'emibtiʔ͡iati in's'üðə bini sarü-**ʔə i-bahu** siti ŋonəntu kəndətu d'a.*
                                                             FG   PF+EVID
       'He tied his wife to the sledge with a rope, he was on the sledge him-
       self.'

(18)   *Təgətə tahar͡iaiʔ, səd'əəti kunsini, n'enat'iʔ͡ia bigaj təi-**hüaŋhu**,*
                                                             FG   EVID
       D'entəd'iəgətə konintiə bigaj.
       'On their way, it is said, there seemed to be a huge river, a river next
       to the Yenisei.'

(19)   *Təti bigaj n'imti i-**s'üə** i-**bahu** Gəl't'iha.*   BG   PST+EVID
       'The name of the river was Golchikha, as it is said.'
       …

6.3.5 Mixed strategy

This text was recorded from the same speaker as the text in 7.3.4. This text is
more personal and subjective in its nature: the narrator speaks about her own
experience from her childhood, she tells a concrete event. Here a "mixed"
strategy can be identified: the foreground does not fit into one frame of tense
or evidential. The perfective aorist and the general past tense alternate, they
are used seemingly inconsistently. Furthermore, evidentials are also applied,
however, they belong mostly to the background. In (19) the narrative evidential
also occurs because the speaker did not see who broke the window, however,
she was present.

   The story begins in the past tense (from (1) to (3)), and it is almost consi-
stently used until (9), then it is changed to perfective aorist until (27). In the
first section, the speaker mentions the exact date of the event, so it requires
a deictic tense (past). The main part (II) is about the events of that evening,

so the deictic tense is used. In (7 and 17), the predicate introduces a direct quotation – this type of predicate typically stands in the aorist, and, after the quoted sentence, the speaker does not return to the past tense but remains in the aorist. In (21) and (23) we find past tense again, but these utterances give background information. It can be observed that the background and foreground are marked relative to each other.

(ChND_061023_School_nar)

(I) Abstract and Orientation

(1)   *Ɖuʔəiʔ tisʼatʼi ŋamia͡jtʼümə dʼir səŋhəbiiʔ sʼajbəmtiə hüətənu*
    miŋ Abamunuʔ koruʔtini ləŋu-d'ii-ðə školamiʔ.
                                                     BG   PST
    'In our settlement, in Ust-Avam in 1957 the school burned down.'

(2)   *Təə tʼühəni təndə ŋamiajdʼümə dʼalɨ isʼüðə i-s'üə soldatiʔ*
    prazdnʼikə.   BG   PST
    'In that time the next day was the day of the Soviet Army.'

(3)   *Sʼitibiiʔ nagür fʼevralʼi.*   BG   NOM
    '23th of February.'

(II) Complicating Action

(4)   *Miŋ ŋuʔəlʼaiʔ kuntu-d'üü-nüʔ.*   FG   PST
    'We went to bed.'

(5)   *Urubaakinʼüʔ nʼaagəiʔ melɨði-siə-miʔ, küðïahüʔ sʼerəniakəniʔ.*
                                                        FG   PST
    'We put our clothes in order so that we could put it on tomorrow.'

(6)   *Tahari͡aiʔ hiinʼdʼa nʼi-ŋi-niʔ kitəʔkəruʔ.*   FG   AOR+INTER
    'They woke us up at night.'

(7)   *Nʼanʼüʔ miŋ kitəkə-ndu-ʔ.*   MN   AOR
    'Other children woke us.'

(8)   *«Nənsuŋindiəiʔ, nənsuŋindiəiʔ».*   DQ   IMP
    '"Get up, get up!"'

(9)   *Mənə tahari͡aiʔ kundüa-suə-m ŋanuə ŋua kadʼani.*
                                                     BG   PST
    'I slept by the door.'

(10)   *Kuəʔmaʔku təi-**s'üə** s'üarmə.*   BG   PST
         'Kuomaku was my friend.'

(11)   *Heluʔu͡a ŋad'a.*   BG   NOM
         'Hela's sister.'

(12)   *Tə Kuəʔmaʔkumə d'ütügətə mənə ŋimia͡lməbti-ʔə:*
                                                        FG   PF
         'Kuomaku grasped me by the hand:'
         Nənsuðiŋ!   FG   (DQ: IMP)
         '"Get up!"'

(13)   *Mənə nənsu-ʔi-nə.*   FG   PF
         'I got up.'

(14)   *Urubaakəmə n'akələni͡agənə, bəbənə n'i nənsu-ʔi-nə.*
                                                        FG   PF
         'I got on the bed to take the clothes (the clothes hung on the nail).'

(15)   *Təniʔi͡a il'aatutənə kad'ad'əmə ŋua het'əi-ʔə.*
                                                        FG   PF
         'When I got onto the bed, the door next to me caught fire.'

(16)   *Ou, tətirə mənə n'aagəiʔ banul'i-ʔə s'iəðirə d'a.*
                                                        FG   PF
         'She pulled me to the window.'

(17)   *D'atənə munu-**ntu**:*   MN   AOR
         'She told me.'
         *"Əmənia s'iəðirə d'a koni-**gumi**".*   DQ   IMP
         '"Let's go to the window!"'

(18)   *S'iəðirə taania kəitəni tahari͡aiʔ s'iəðirin'iʔ t'ambitəri-**ti**-ndəʔ.*
                                                        FG   AOR
         'Outside the window they were breaking the windows.'

(19)   *Kaŋkəə t'ambil'i-**hi͡a**ði-ndəʔ.*   BG   EVID
         'They had been broken for a long time.

(20)   *Təniðə ŋansə ut'it'el'iniʔ d'amuə səjbu-**tu**.*
                                                                    BG   AOR
        'The voice of our teacher was heard from there.'

(21)   *Ut'it'el'imiʔ i-**s'üə**, Mel'n'ikova Gal'ina St'epanovna.*
                                                                    BG   PST
        'Melnikova Galina Stepanovna was our teacher.'

(22)   *L'üəsa kobtua.*   BG   NOM
        'A Russian girl.'

(23)   *Tahari͡aiʔ ŋami͡ajd'ümə s'iəðirə t'ambitətiə i-**s'üə** i-**bahu***
                                                                    BG   PST+NARR
        Porbin Ləməðiʔ, Hurəbaʔa n'imti͡abtirti.
        'The other window is said to have been broken by Porbin Lamabi,
        nicknamed Hurabaa.'

(24)   *Mii təndə s'iəðirməni ŋimil'əri-ʔi-ni?.*   FG   PF
        'We were dragged through the window.'

(25)   *N'erəbtiküʔ Kuəʔmaʔkumə lot'u n'i nə... a mou n'i...*
                                                                    FG   PF
        s'ürü n'i nənsubtiri-ʔi-ðə.
        'First Kuomaku was put on the floor... on the ground, on the snow.'
        …

7 Conclusion

The main objective of this paper has not been met yet…, namely the exact explanation for the cultural and cognitive motivation of the formulation of TAME strategy in Nganasan narratives. But this analysis proves that a relation of the use of past tense and perfective aorist and their role in the storytelling may be motivated by ethnosyntactic factors, however, further investigation is needed to clarify if this is so. The motivation of the study is the various and complicated system of TAME categories in Nganasan. The full picture cannot be drawn here, but some results are as follows.

Labov's and Hopper's foreground/background distinction seems to be fruitful and relevant in the case of Nganasan. If we can separate the background marking from the foreground, the temporal structure of the "skeleton" is clearer, and some patterns and strategies can be recognized. The two main strategies are the use of past tense and perfective aorist. It means that there are two basic story-telling temporal frames: perfective aorist and general past tense. The first one is

more typical in the folklore genres. The aorist is not a deictic category, it seems that the perfective aorist is used in general storytelling where the relation of the narrator to the events is not relevant, the story could happen anywhere and anytime, consequently, in folklore genres, the use of perfective aorist is more typical. When the speaker uses the aorist, the relative chronology of the pieces of the story is highlighted, and it could happen anytime and anywhere, whereas the past tense occurs typically in more deictic contexts. These two strategies can be combined with narrative/reportative evidentiality (past+narrative and perfective+narrative). The past tense + narrative evidential is more frequent. Other tenses occur in the background and quoted clauses, but the high rate of a direct quotation often contains parts of the foreground.

Labov's oral narrative structure description is applicable in the case of the Nganasan narratives as well. In this paper, I have concentrated mainly on the relation of the beginning and the main parts, i.e. the Abstract and Complicating Action.

In expressing the foreground, not just the tense and aspect, but evidentiality plays a fundamental role as well. There are various tense/aspect strategies on the foreground that can be combined with narrative evidentiality, but the narrative evidential can mark background information.

From the point of view of individual language proficiency and story-telling ability, more narrative evidential means more perfective aorist and less deictic past tense. It can be an effect of Russian (or Western cultural) influence, for instance, more Russian influence, more indirect speech constructions (with person shift), less use of the aorist but more of the deictic (past) tense.

When there is no reference to the narrator's speech time or the events' time, the aorist comes to the fore. Non-folklore narratives therefore begin in past tense, anchorage takes place, the speaker clarifies his/her relationship to the events to be narrated. In folklore texts, this happens very rarely, as usually there is no direct connection between the storyteller and the story. Analyzing seven Dyaiku texts, demonstrates that typically only the introductory parts are in past tense, the other parts mostly in aorist.

In Nganasan stories we find sequences: typical beginnings and segments. These are well reflected in the tense of the foreground. A relevant part of the foreground can be the utterances of the characters that belong to the mainline. The dialogues are relevant and frequent parts of narratives. Shifts of deictic elements very rarely occur in the quoted clauses, the direct quotation is general. It means that the predicate of quoted speech can co-occur with various types of TAME. The turning points are usually marked with a speaking verb, particles or intonation but can als remain unmarked. In reported speech, any TAM suffix can occur from the perspective of the original speaker but be bereft

of evidentials. In reported speech the deictic past tense is more usual than the perfective aorist.

Finally, an ethnosyntactic base can be detected behind the use of the aorist – but full-fledged proof of this requires further investigation, into notions such as the "value" of time in the Nganasan culture. It seems that in the use of the aorist the prominence of the present moment and real-time of life are reflected.

Abbreviations

AOR	aorist
BG	background
DQ	direct quotation
EVID	evidential
FG	foreground
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
IMP	imperative
INTER	interrogative
ITER	iterative
LOC	locative
MN	metanarrative element
NARR	narrative
NEG	negation
NOM	nominal predicate
NMLZ	nominalizer perfect
PF	perfective
PRS	present
PST	past tense
PTCP	particple
SG	singular

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