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Kim, D.; Kim D.

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Author: Kim, Deborah

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Evidentiality and new information

This chapter describes two categories in which information is coded, both of which are marked by the perfect stem of the verb: 1) evidentiality, or how the information was obtained, and 2) new information, which has been perceived or recognized by the speaker but has not yet been assimilated into her existing body of knowledge. Evidentiality and new information are not the only contexts in which the perfect is used, but are extended uses to the primary verbal meaning of the perfect, which is stative.

For evidentiality, Sarikoli does not have a complex system of marking specific information sources, but has a single evidential: information can be marked as non-firsthand/indirect experience, as opposed to information acquired directly through firsthand observation, which is unmarked. Non-firsthand experience includes information obtained through verbal report from someone else (hearsay) or conclusions that have been inferred based on general knowledge or specific evidence. This non-firsthand meaning is semantically related to the perfect: just as the perfect marks a situation that is completed but whose results are still relevant for the present, an inference or verbal report is made based on the results of a completed situation (Aikhenvald 2004:112, Comrie 1976:110).

New information is something that has not been integrated into the speaker's existing knowledge structure at the time of perception or discovery. It includes information that is newly discovered, unexpected, or surprising to the speaker. It is not limited to information that is perceived at the speech moment, but also includes perceptions that were new to the speaker in the past. It is marked differently from the unmarked factual statement. Factual statements are felicitous only if the propositional content is already part of the speaker's body of knowledge and assumed to be unknown to the addressee:

- (12.1) *m-oto* *az ta* *χafo sut*
 1SG.NNOM-father ABL 2SG.NNOM upset become.PFV
 'My father has gotten upset at you.'

The sentence in (12.1) is a factual statement, which is conveyed as the speaker's exclusive knowledge. It presupposes that the speaker is already fully aware of this information and the addressee is not, and serves an informative function. Information that is new to the speaker, however, cannot be expressed as a factual statement. It must take the perfect verb stem, as in (12.2):

- (12.2) *m-oto* *az ta* *χafo sɛðdz*
 1SG.NNOM-father ABL 2SG.NNOM upset become.PRF
 'My father has gotten upset at you. (Evidential/New information)'

In (12.2), the speaker's intention is not to inform the addressee of a fact, but to communicate that the perception, discovery, or realization of this fact was new to the speaker at the time of perception.

Various terms have been used to describe the grammatical marking of new information: immediate (Nichols 1986), unprepared mind (Aksu-Koç & Slobin 1986), mediative (Lazard 1999), and mirative (DeLancey 1997; Watters 2002; Aikhenvald 2004). This grammar will simply refer to it as new information.

Since the same form is used for marking non-firsthand information and firsthand evidence for newly apprehended knowledge, a sentence using the perfect verb can be ambiguous between the two senses, and speakers rely on context to distinguish between the two. These two extended meanings of the perfect share a semantic similarity in that the speaker is making the discovery or inference herself, and claims personal responsibility for the veracity of the proposition. Unlike direct quotations which specify a source of information, propositions marked as non-firsthand or new information are based directly on the speaker's perception of the situation (Watters 2002:297).

The marking of evidentiality and new information interacts with aspect, as its form is determined by the aspect and predicate type of the neutral expression. Perfective propositions are marked by the perfect stem of the verb (§12.1), while imperfective ones are marked by means of the copula *veðdz* (the perfect stem of *vid*) in combination with an infinitive verb with the dative marker = *ir* (§12.2). Non-verbal clauses take *veðdz* (§12.3), regardless of whether the neutral expression is perfective or imperfective. The three sections of this chapter present additional examples showing the contexts in which the evidential or new information perfect is used. Each of the examples is accompanied by the neutral expression that the speaker is reporting, which is the unmarked proposition that is assumed to have a firsthand information source and is part of the speaker's existing body of knowledge. Evidential or new information uses of the perfect are restricted to declarative and interrogative main clauses, and do not occur in subordinate clauses.

12.1 Perfective propositions

In a perfective situation which the speaker has learned about through a second-hand source, or discovered as new information through direct observation, the perfect stem of the verb is used, along with the appropriate perfective pronominal clitic attached to a constituent before the verb. Optionally, *veðdz* may occur sentence-finally, so that there are two adjacent perfect predicates, as in (12.3). In this example, the speaker may have heard from another person that the people in question have moved, or have seen physical evidence from which their move could be inferred, or have directly observed those people as they were moving, as long as the speaker had not been expecting it.

- (12.3) *katç = af tçəwydz (veðdz)*
 move = 3PL.PFV do.PRF be.PRF
 ‘They have moved. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *katç = af tçəwg*)

The new information use of the perfect commonly occurs with a first person subject, and implies lack of control, inadvertent action, and ensuing surprise. For the speaker to be unaware of a situation that she participated in, it “requires inattention or lack of consciousness” (Watters 2002:292). The following examples of newly discovered information contain a first person subject in a perfective situation. In these examples, the speaker realizes that she has not done something she was supposed to. The sentence in (12.4) is exclaimed when the speaker was planning to wake up early in the morning, but realizes that she has slept much longer than planned. (12.5) is used when the speaker discovers a mistake in her writing. (12.6) is uttered when the speaker realizes that she has still not sent the photos that she had promised to send the addressee.

- (12.4) *waz = am utç dejt undəwdz*
 1SG.NOM = 1SG.PFV very late get.up.PRF
 ‘I got up so late! (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *waz = am utç dejt undəwd*)
- (12.5) *χatu = am naviçtç*
 incorrect = 1SG.PFV write.PRF
 ‘I wrote it incorrectly! (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *χatu = am naviçt*)

- (12.6) *nəwz = am tu = ri na buxtə*
still = 1SG.PFV 2SG.NNOM = DAT NEG send.PRF
 ‘I still have not sent them to you! (Evidential/New information)’
 (Neutral expression: *nəwz = am tu = ri na buxt*)

If the speaker has directly heard someone express something eloquently, or speak Tajik fluently, and is impressed or surprised by it, the perfect is the appropriate form for a compliment, as in (12.7) & (12.8), respectively. Alternatively, even if the speaker has not heard it directly, she may be informed about these impressive abilities through someone else and give the same compliments.

- (12.7) *təardz = at levdz*
good = 2SG.PFV say.PRF
 ‘You spoke well. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *təardz = at levd*)

- (12.8) *tudzik ziv = at pur xumand səðdz*
Tajik tongue = 2SG.PFV much learn become.PRF
 ‘You have learned so much Tajik. (Evidential/New information)’
 (Neutral expression: *tudzik ziv = at pur xumand sut*)

A person has arrived at his destination and pulls out a watch to look at the time, only to realize that he and his companions have arrived three hours early, and says (12.9), because it is new information. Or, if he does not have a watch and someone else informs him about the time, (12.9) is how he reports this fact to his companions, as the information was obtained through hearsay.

- (12.9) *haroj suat waxti = an friptə*
three hour early = 1PL.PFV reach.PRF
 ‘We have arrived three hours early. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *haroj suat waxti = an fript*)

A person has a conversation on the phone regarding the arrival or departure of a group of people, and afterwards reports the information he has learned to the people around him, saying (12.10) or (12.11), respectively. Or he may see that they have not arrived yet and say (12.10), or see them walking out the door and say (12.11), if he is surprised by those situations.

- (12.10) *nəwz = af na iθtɕ*
 still = 3PL.PFV NEG come.PRF
 ‘They still have not come. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *nəwz = af na jot*)
- (12.11) *wəð = af ɕitɕ naxtuɣdz*
 3PL.NOM.DIST = 3PL.PFV now go.up.PRF
 ‘They have gone out just now. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *wəð = af ɕitɕ naxtuɣ*)

Example (12.12) comes from someone who has inferred that a child has gotten tired. The child might have even told her that he is tired. (12.12) is what she says to inform the child’s grandmother. Similarly, in (12.13), the speaker may have seen the angry people with her own eyes when she was not anticipating it, came to that conclusion based on other evidence, or heard about their anger from another person. She is now reporting the situation to someone else with the sentence in (12.13).

- (12.12) *ta nabus aluk sɛðdz*
 2SG.NNOM grandchild tired become.PRF
 ‘Your grandchild has gotten tired. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *ta nabus aluk sut*)
- (12.13) *wəð = af χafo sɛðdz*
 3PL.NOM.DIST = 3PL.PFV upset become.PRF
 ‘They got upset. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *wəð = af χafo sut*)

A person who has received news of the birth of a baby says (12.14) to the newborn’s grandmother.

- (12.14) *təw = at mom sɛðdz*
 2SG.NOM = 2SG.PFV grandmother become.PRF
 ‘You have become a grandmother. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *təw = at mom sut*)

Upon realizing this fact, the speaker may say it even if the new grandmother is already fully aware of it.

Upon encountering someone after not seeing her for a while, one might notice that her hair has grown much longer and say (12.15).

- (12.15) *ta xad daruz seðdz*
 2SG.NNOM hair long become.PRF
 ‘Your hair has gotten long. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *ta xad daruz sut*)

In this situation, the speaker is obviously not informing the addressee that her hair has gotten longer, but is simply expressing that he had not known about it and has just discovered this information for the first time.

Shonyoz tells his mother about how he has protected his friends from danger by discouraging them from playing in the deep part of the river. He then asks her the sentence in (12.16) with the perfect verb, since he has presented her with new information.

- (12.16) *tçardz = am tçəwydz = o*
 good = 1SG.PFV do.PRF = Q
 ‘Did I do well? (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *tçardz = am tçəwg = o*)

The non-firsthand extension of the perfect is frequently used in the telling of folktales, since storytellers strive to tell folktales just as they previously heard it from another person. It is highly unusual for Sarikoli speakers to create a new story in the style of a traditional folk tale. The following examples are taken from three different folktales. (12.17) tells the family situation as the background to the story. (12.18) is a situation that occurs three times throughout the story. (12.19) is the climax of the story, in which the king punishes the crow for telling lies, and is the explanation of why the crow cries in the way it does today.

- (12.17) *i maθ i lagi wəf a = jaχ*
 one day one day 3PL.NNOM.DIST ACC = sister

tej = af tçəwydz, wi az zabu
 wedding = 3PL.PFV do.PRF 3SG.NNOM.DIST ABL back

itçand sul nardzεðdz, ju batço-εf
 several year pass.PRF 3SG.NOM.DIST child-PL.NNOM

ato məwydz
 father die.PRF
 ‘One day, they had their sister’s wedding. After that, some years passed, and those children’s father died. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *i maθ i lagi wəf a = jaχ tej = af tçəwg, wi az zabu itçand sul nardzed, ju batço-εf ato məwg*)

- (12.18) *yubun a=məwl-ef wux-in dzuj juðdz*
 shepherd ACC=sheep-PL.NNOM grass-ADJ place take.PRF
- χurondz, pejcin a=wef pojdz*
 eat.CAUS.PRF late.afternoon ACC=3PL.NNOM.DIST herd.PRF
- iθtç*
 come.PRF
- ‘The shepherd took the sheep to a grassy place and fed them, and drove them back in the late afternoon. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *yubun a=məwl-ef wux-in dzuj jud xurond, pejcin a=wef pojdz jot*)

- (12.19) *qarbo wi pa bun iθtç χu*
 crow 3SG.NNOM.DIST LOC base come.PRF TEMP.CONJ
- qarbo=ri levdz iko χu ziv zwoð,*
 crow=DAT say.PRF SC REFL.NNOM tongue pull.out.IPFV
- qarbo χu ziv zwuçtç, putxu iθtç*
 crow REFL.NNOM tongue pull.out.PRF king come.PRF
- χu wi ziv xtçaxtç*
 TEMP.CONJ 3SG.NNOM.DIST tongue cut.PRF
- ‘The crow came up beside him and (he) said to the crow, “Stick out your tongue.” The crow stuck out his tongue. The king came and cut off his tongue. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *qarbo wi pa bun jot χu qarbo=ri levd iko χu ziv zwoð, qarbo χu ziv zwust, putxu jot χu wi ziv xtçaxtç*)

12.2 Imperfective propositions

When reporting an imperfective situation that the speaker has discovered as new information, or learned about through someone else or made an inference based on evidence, the infinitive stem of the verb is used, followed by the dative marker =*ir* and perfect copula *veðdz*. The subject-verb agreement pronominal clitics are attached to a constituent preceding the verb.

A friend of Zeynura has heard from someone else that Zeynura is currently living with her aunt, or is planning to. Or she may have actually visited Zeynura’s aunt’s house and seen Zeynura living there, but was unaware of that situation

prior to the visit. Now when she tells other people about Zeynura's living situation, she will use the perfect verb form, as in (12.20):

- (12.20) *zejnura χu vits qati nalist = ir veðdz*
 Zeynura REFL.NNOM aunt with live.INF = DAT be.PRF
 'Zeynura is living with her aunt. (Evidential/New information)'
 (Neutral expression: *zejnura χu vits qati naθt*)

Similarly, a friend of Khaqiqat's may have been told by someone that Khaqiqat is, or is planning to, take driving lessons. Or he may have happened to encounter Khaqiqat during his driving lesson and learned about Khaqiqat's new activity, which he had not known before. Now he will report this discovery to others by saying (12.21):

- (12.21) *haqiqat mas moçin det χumand set = ir*
 Khaqiqat also car drive.INF learn become.INF = DAT

veðdz
 be.PRF
 'Khaqiqat is also learning to drive. (Evidential/New information)'
 (Neutral expression: *haqiqat mas moçin det χumand sæwd*)

Upon hearing about a woman who is about to give birth to twins, people share the news with others by saying (12.22). (12.22) is also appropriate if the doctor or midwife has actually seen the woman giving birth to twins and is telling others about it, but the birth is still in progress (since it is in the imperfective form).

- (12.22) *parus tej tçəwydz = endz kots padiom batço*
 last.year wedding do.PRF = REL girl twin child

vejg = ir veðdz
 bring.INF = DAT be.PRF
 'The girl who got married last year will give birth to twins. (Evidential/New information)' (Neutral expression: *parus tej tçəwydz = endz kots padiom batço vird*)

People are expecting certain guests at a party when the host's daughter receives a phone call from Uncle Mahsat, who tells her that his family will not be able to attend. She then announces this information to the adults by saying (12.23). Or, the hosts may wait for a few hours and, seeing that it has

gotten far too late for anyone to come, they might simply conclude that Uncle Mahsat's family will not join them, saying (12.23).

- (12.23) *dud maχsat tçed-nændz-χejl=af na*
 uncle Mahsat house-ADJ-PL.NOM=3PL.PFV NEG
jct=ir veðdz
 come.INF=DAT be.PRF
 'Uncle Mahsat's family is not coming. (Evidential/New information)' (Neutral expression: *dud maχsat tçed-nændz-χejl na joð=in*)

(12.24) comes from a situation in which the addressee has failed to demonstrate knowledge of certain things, and the speaker is frustrated about how ignorant the addressee is. Alternatively, the speaker may have heard from someone else that the addressee is ignorant, and is now reporting this information to the addressee.

- (12.24) *təw=at hitç tsiz na wazond=ir veðdz*
 2SG.NOM=2SG.PFV none thing NEG know.INF=DAT be.PRF
 'You do not know anything. (Evidential/New information)' (Neutral expression: *təw hitç tsiz na wazon*)

Likewise, when saying (12.25), the speaker has just become newly aware that the child could speak. Or, even if he has not witnessed it himself, he may have been informed by someone else that the child can speak.

- (12.25) *jad batço gap tçi tçejg=ir veðdz*
 3SG.NOM.PROX child word CAP do.INF=DAT be.PRF
 'This child can talk. (Evidential/New information)' (Neutral expression: *jad batço gap tçi kaxt*)

Geelof reaches up to the top of the pile of folded blankets to get her Sheydoi (female cap), only to realize that she is not tall enough to reach it. Because this is newly apprehended knowledge, she says (12.26). If she had not tried reaching for it herself, but someone had told her she will not be able to reach it, she could also have reported this information by saying (12.26).

- (12.26) *mu qad na fript=ir veðdz*
 1SG.NNOM height NEG reach.INF=DAT be.PRF
 'My height does not reach. (Evidential/New information)' (Neutral expression: *mu qad na fropst*)

- (12.29) *k = dos = af* *levd = ir* *veðdz*
 ANA = manner = 3PL.PFV say.INF = DAT be.PRF
 ‘That is how they say it (so I have noticed). (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *k = dos lev = in*)

Geeljahon wants her mother to come pick her up after school, but her mother thinks she is old enough to walk back home by herself. In an attempt to convince her mother, she says (12.30). Even if the situation had occurred in the distant past, she can convey that the discovery was new and unassimilated knowledge at the time, and it is still reported in the perfect as if she had just discovered something new in the recent past.

- (12.30) *ju* *rots ano* *hara maθ jet = ir*
 3SG.NOM.DIST girl mother every day come.INF = DAT

veðdz
 be.PRF
 ‘That girl’s mother comes every day (so I have noticed). (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *ju rots ano hara maθ joðd*)

12.3 Non-verbal propositions

When reporting a perfective or imperfective state which the speaker has newly discovered through direct observation or learned about through another source, the perfect stem of the *vid* copula is used. If the neutral expression contains an existential predicate (*jost* or *nist*), as in (12.31) & (12.32), new or non-firsthand information also requires the perfect stem. The appropriate pronominal agreement clitic attaches to a constituent before the verb.

An outsider may not have known that there are camels in Varshide. Upon encountering one, or simply hearing that camels exist in Varshide, he might say (12.31):

- (12.31) *pa varçide xtur mas veðdz*
 LOC Varshide camel also be.PRF
 ‘They even have camels in Varshide. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *pa varçide xtur mas jost*)

Geelnuz is returning home after herding sheep for a few hours. After stepping into the house and looking around, she realizes that the usually-crowded home

is empty. She might say (12.32) to herself, or say it to her sister on the phone. Geelnuz's sister, who is helping her mother wash the laundry in the stream and also unaware of this fact, may turn to her mother and report what she heard by saying (12.32).

- (12.32) *pa tɕed hitɕ tɕoj na veðdʒ*
 LOC house none who.NOM NEG be.PRF
 ‘There is no one at home. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *pa tɕed hitɕ tɕoj nist*)

Honim is driving her yaks to the grassland when she notices that one of the boys from her neighborhood is throwing rocks at her yaks. She gets upset with him and says (12.33). (12.33) may also be used if Honim has heard from someone else about how mean that boy is, even if she has never observed or experienced it herself.

- (12.33) *təw = at ʒitkari veðdʒ*
 2SG.NOM = 2SG.PFV bad.guy be.PRF
 ‘You are a bad guy. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *təw ʒitkari*)

Zulfiqor goes to the bazaar to buy carrots, but finds that they are all covered with a thick layer of dust, and complains to the shopkeeper by saying (12.34). Another customer who was hoping to buy carrots overhears this and calls his wife to tell her (12.34).

- (12.34) *woð = af pukzo na veðdʒ*
 3PL.NOM.DIST = 3PL.PFV clean NEG be.PRF
 ‘They are not clean. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *woð pukzo nist*)

Tilahon and her husband are searching for their children, who have been playing with their friends all day. After going around the neighborhood for several hours, they are about to give up. As a last strand of hope, Tilahon decides to try the school. She finds her kids reading books in one of the classrooms. She immediately calls her husband and says (12.35), using the perfect because it is new information. Her husband, who has heard this information from her, shares it with the relatives and other worried parents by saying (12.35) as well, since he obtained the information through hearsay.

- (12.35) *wəð = af pa maktab vɛðdz*
 3PL.NOM.DIST = 3PL.PFV LOC school be.PRF
 ‘They are at the school. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *wəð pa maktab*)

Two friends are eating a meal together, and one of them, Gholib, has never tried a certain food. When Gholib takes his first bite of that food, his friend asks (12.36) to find out how he likes it. When his friend goes home and tells his family about Gholib’s experience with trying the new food, they might also ask (12.36), using the non-firsthand perfect because they are asking about information that he heard from Gholib.

- (12.36) *χεg vɛðdz = o*
 sweet be.PRF = Q
 ‘Is it delicious? (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *χεg = o*)

A newlywed couple visits the wife’s family friend who could not attend their wedding, and they meet the groom for the first time. Shortly after they greet each other, sit down, and start drinking tea, the bride asks her friends (12.37) to see what they think of his looks. Later, she can also ask the same question to a friend who is involved in the neighborhood gossip, if she wants to find out what others are saying about her husband’s looks.

- (12.37) *mu tɛur χuɛruj vɛðdz = o*
 1SG.NNOM.DIST husband beautiful be.PRF = Q
 ‘Is my husband handsome? (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *mu tɛur χuɛruj = o*)

A person has come to the village of Teeng for the first time, and after a day or two, the Teeng villagers ask him (12.38). After he returns home, other people who know about his Teeng visit might ask the same question. There is another person who has never been to Teeng but has heard a lot about it through his friends from Teeng. Since he is knowledgeable about Teeng through second-hand information, he might be asked the question in (12.38) by other people.

- (12.38) *tung tsarang dzuj vɛðdz*
 Teeng how place be.PRF
 ‘What did you think of Teeng? (Evidential/New information)’
 (Neutral expression: *tung tsarang dzuj*)

Storytelling is one of the major functions served by the non-firsthand extension of the perfect. The following example, as well as (12.17) - (12.19), demonstrate that non-firsthand is associated with the entire genre of folktales, and not just with individual statements (Watters 2002:300). (12.39) is a typical way to begin a folktale. The first clause is the aperture, a formulaic opening of a narrative. Even if the baseline narrative shifts to different aspects in other parts of the story, the aperture always uses the evidential perfect.

(12.39) *veðdz na veðdz haroj vrud=af veðdz,*
 be.PRF NEG be.PRF three brother=3PL.PFV be.PRF

ðaw=af χudi veðdz, iw ugej
 two=3PL.PFV same.father.mother be.PRF one non.blood

‘Once upon a time, there were three brothers. Two were blood brothers, one was a non-blood brother. (Evidential/New information)’ (Neutral expression: *haroj vrud=af vud, ðaw=af χudi vud, iw ugej*)