

Predicate focus and realis mood in Tundra Yukaghir and beyond

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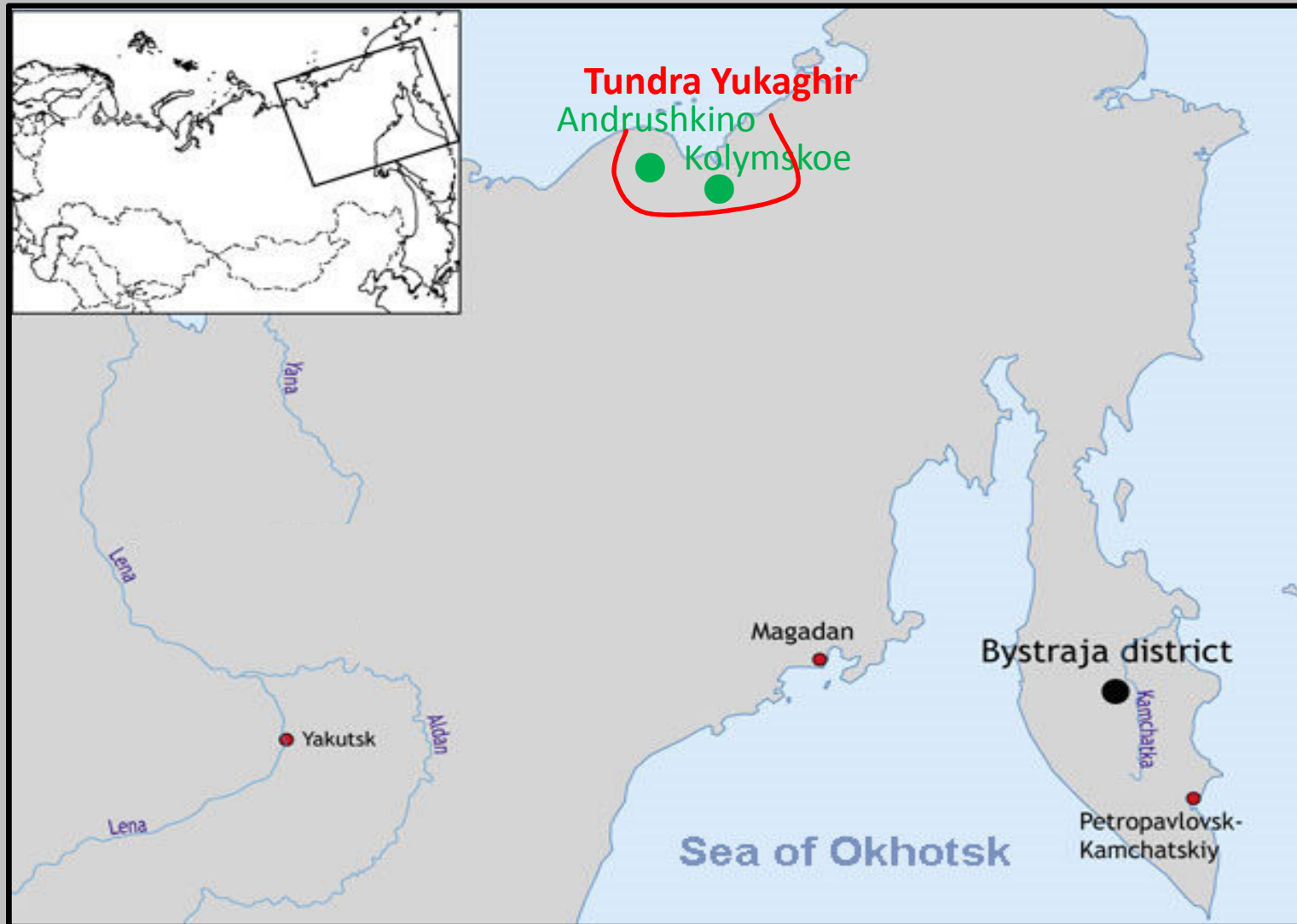
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Basic Claim

(a) Predicate focus needn't be encoded with a dedicated linguistic sign but may be a pragmatically derived inference read off from the encoded realis mood.

(b) Due to this connection, realis mood markers can conventionalize and develop into dedicated predicate focus markers.

Tundra Yukaghir



TY particle $m\bar{a}(r)=$ and predicate focus

- Three clause types in TY
 - (a) focus case on S/O + focus agreement on the verb
S/O focus type
 - (b) no focus case + neutral agreement
zero type
 - (c) no focus case + proclitic $m\bar{a}(r)=$ + neutral agreement
 $m\bar{a}(r)=$ type

TY particle *mə(r)=* and predicate focus

S/O focus type: narrow focus on S/O

- (1) *Neme-ləŋ iŋe:-məŋ?* *Labunmə-ləŋ* *iŋe:-məŋ.*
what-FOC fear-OF.1/2SG ptarmigan-FOC fear-OF.1/2SG
“ – What do you fear? – I fear ptarmigans.” (K05: 240)

Zero type: narrow focus on non-S/O

- (2) *Qaduŋudəŋ kew-ej?* *Moskva-ŋiń* *kew-eč.*
whither go-PF(3SG) Moscow-DAT go-PF.INTR(3SG)
“ – Where did he go? – He went to Moscow.” (GNK_el2_2008)

TY particle $m\acute{a}(r)=$ and predicate focus

S/O focus type and Zero type – different kinds of argument/adjunct foci

⇒ $m\acute{a}(r)$ type **must encode predicate focus**

TY particle *mə(r)=* and predicate focus

Arguments for *mə(r)=* as predicate focus

(a) Obligatory in yes/no questions & answers

(3) *Nime mə=we:-ŋa?* *Mə=we:-ŋa.*
house MƏ(R)=do-TR.3PL MƏ(R)-do-TR.3PL
“ – Have they built a house? – Yes, they have.”

(3') **Nime we:-ŋa?* *We:-ŋa.*
house do-TR.3PL do-TR.3PL

TY particle *mə(r)=* and predicate focus

Arguments for *mə(r)=* as predicate focus

(b) Obligatory in verb-only sentences

(4) *Mə=keweč.*
MƏ(R)=go.PF.INTR.3SG
'He left/ He did leave.'

(4') **Keweč.*
go.PF.INTR.3SG

TY particle *mə(r)=* and predicate focus

Arguments for *mə(r)=* as predicate focus

(c) In complementary distribution with the first two types

- (1') **Labunmə-ləŋ mər=iŋe:-məŋ.*
ptarmigan-FOC MƏ(R)=fear-OF.1/2SG

TY particle *mə(r)=* and predicate focus

Argument against *mə(r)=* as predicate focus

Cases in which *mə(r)=* cannot be used in verb-only sentences:

- (5) **Mər=u:-jə-li!* **correct:** *U:jəli!*
MƏ(R)=go-INTR-1PL
'Let's go!'
- (6) *? *Mə=lewdə-l-buń-i.* **correct:** *Lewdəlbuńi.*
MƏ(R)=eat-AN-DES-INTR.3SG
'He might want to eat.'

TY particle $m\grave{a}(r)=$ and predicate focus

Argument against $m\grave{a}(r)=$ as predicate focus

$m\grave{a}(r)=$ is incompatible with:

negation

directives

conditionals, etc.

These incompatibilities do not follow from the purported predicate focus meaning.

TY $m\exists(r)=$ and realis mood

- The meaning of $m\exists(r)=$ is to explicitly express the existential closure over the event variable.
- $m\exists(r)=$ establishes the reference of the segment of the world for which the description given by the clause holds true.
- It implies the commitment on the part of the speaker to the truthfulness of the proposition.

⇒ $m\exists(r)=$ is used as a marker of the realis mood.

TY $m\partial(r)=$ and realis mood

Some evidence for $m\partial(r)=$'s existential semantics

(a) Incompatible with all the moods, illocutionary types and polarities which imply non-existence of the event

TY *mə(r)*= and realis mood

Some evidence for *mə(r)*=’s existential semantics

(b) Incompatible with negative polarity items (which demand non-veridical contexts)

- (7) *Mət-in neme-ŋo:lləŋ ət=saqsərə-mək.*
I-DAT what-NPI.O COND=pour-TR.2SG
‘If you would be so kind to pour me a little bit.’
- (8) **Kin-o:ll’əlk mə=kelu-j.*
who-NPI.S MƏ(R)=come-INTR.3SG

TY *mə(r)*= and realis mood

Some evidence for *mə(r)*= 's existential semantics

(c) With question words, it induces specific indefinite readings

(9) *monayər*- 'say what'

(a) *Tittel* *monayər-ŋi?*
they say.what-INTR.3PL
,What did they say?'

(b) *Tittel* *əl=monayər-ŋu.*
they NEG-say.what-INTR.3PL(NEG)
'They didn't say anything.'

(c) *Tittel* *mə=monayər-ŋi.*
they MƏR-say.what-INTR.3PL
'They said something.'

TY $m\partial(r)=$ and focus sentences

Why is $m\partial(r)=$ unnecessary in sentences which contain nominal foci?

(a) Nominal foci function as the device by which descriptions of events are bound to temporal segments and turned into assertions (ε operators). Since existential binding of the event is provided for through nominal foci, via entailment, $m\partial(r)=$ is unnecessary.

TY *mə(r)=* and focus sentences

Why is *mə(r)=* unnecessary in sentences which contain nominal foci?

(b) Focus sentences in TY are originally clefts, i.e. stative predications. Statives in TY (and across languages) are often exempt from realis marking.

Similar cases: Somali

Northern Somali (Saeed 1984, 2009, Ajello 1995, Tosco 2002)

Declarative positive sentences in N. Somali must be marked:

(a) with non-verbal focus morpheme *baa/ayaa*

(b) with the particle *waa*; according to Ajello 1995, *waa* has distributional properties of a modal

Similar cases: Somali

(10) *Cali* ***baa*** *imanaya.*

Cali FOC come.PROG.PR.3M.FOC
,CALI is coming.'

(11) *Cali* ***wuu*** *yimid.*

Cali WAA=he come.PAST.3M
,Cali ARRIVED.'

Similar cases: Somali

- Focus marker *baa/ayaa* and *waa* are in complementary distribution
- *baa/ayaa* construction stems from a cleft structure
- *waa* has modal elements to its meaning

Similar cases: Vietnamese

Vietnamese (Duffield 2007, Jannedy 2007, Hole 2008)

- Preverbal particle *có* used in cases without nominal focus and in complementary distribution with other illocutionary/modal markers
- Additional feature: not obligatory, but mostly used in „emphatic“ contexts

Similar cases: Vietnamese

(12) *Anh có mua sách!*

PRN CO buy book

,He DID buy the book!'

(13) *Anh có mua sách, không? – Có.*

PRN CO buy book NEG CO

,Did you buy the book?' – ,Yes, I did.'

Other possible parallels

- Old & Middle Egyptian sentence particle *iw* (Silverman 1980, Satzinger 2006, Allen 2010)
- Basque particle *ba* (Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003)
- Hungarian ‚existential aspect‘ with the finite verb in the focus position and a type of realis reading (É. Kiss 2001, Wedgwood 2005)

Realis mood and predicate focus

- Realis mood expresses that the proposition is true in a segment of the actual world.
- It implies commitment on the part of the speaker to the truth value of the proposition.
- Predicate focus implies assertion of that non-topical elements of the proposition hold true.
- To assert means to commit oneself to the content of the proposition.

Realis mood and predicate focus: Hypothetical diachrony

Realis 1

Marked only if the reality of the event is an issue (emphatic contexts): **Vietnamese**



Realis 2

Marked in all cases in which no other marker of reality is available (no nominal focus): **Tundra Yukaghir, Somali (?)**



Predicate focus

Marked in both realis and non-realism contexts if no nominal focus is present