A Direct Evidential in Siksiká Blackfoot

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1. Introduction

The focus of this paper is the verbal prefix \textit{na-}, as shown in (1) below.\textsuperscript{1}

\begin{align*}
\text{(1)} \quad & \text{Náísootaawa.} \\
\text{na-i-sootaa-wa} & \quad \text{EVID-rain.II-PROX} \\
\text{‘It rained.’}
\end{align*}

The prefix \textit{na-} is restricted to the Siksiká dialect of Blackfoot, a Plains Algonquian language. Siksiká is the northernmost dialect of Blackfoot, spoken in a region approximately 80 kilometres east of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Frantz (1991, 2009) describes \textit{na-} as a past tense marker, but we have observed that the distribution of \textit{na-} is inconsistent with a past tense analysis (cf. Bliss and Ritter 2007). In this paper we argue that \textit{na-} is instead an evidential, and in particular our claim is that \textit{na-} encodes that the origo (or knowledge holder) has conclusive evidence regarding a past time situation.

This paper proceeds as follows. In §2 we outline the model we are assuming, namely Waldie’s (2013) model of evidentiality. Waldie’s model includes three different

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\textsuperscript{1}Unless otherwise cited, all data are from our fieldwork with native speakers of the Siksiká dialect. The generalizations presented here reflect our consultants’ judgments, and are not necessarily consistent with descriptions in Frantz’s (1991, 2009) \textit{Blackfoot Grammar}. Abbreviations: 1=1st person; 2=2nd person; 3=3rd person; AI=animate intransitive; CONJ(unct); CONT(ent); DEM(onstrative); DIR(ect); EVID(ential); FUT(ure); IC=initial change; II=inanimate intransitive; IMP(ulsive); IMPF=imperfective; INAN(imate); INCL(usive); INTERR(ogative); INTNS=intensifier; INVIS(ible); MOD(al); NEG(ative); NONAFF(irmative); OBV(iative); PL(ural); PROX(imate); REP(ortative); SG=singular; SPKR=speaker; TA=transitive animate; TI=transitive inanimate.
evidential relations, and in §3 and §4 we demonstrate that Siksiká *na-* does not encode either of the relations that deal with evidence type – perceptual grounding and manner of support. In §5 we show that Siksiká *na-* encodes the relation that deals with evidence quality – perspectival status – and we discuss distributional facts about *na-* that support this. In §6 we suggest that the categories of evidentiality and epistemic modality can be distinguished from each other, and that *na-* is best characterized as belonging to the former. In §7 we consider the interaction between evidentiality, person, and temporality. We observe that *na-* forms a paradigm with the Blackfoot person prefixes, and we propose an account that treats evidential *na-* and person markers as a natural class. In §8 we conclude.

2. Waldie’s (2013) Model of Evidentiality

We adopt Waldie’s (2013) model of evidentiality. Waldie proposes that evidentiality is concerned with expressing interactions between a situation, an origo, (i.e., a knowledge holder, most often the speaker) and a prejacent (i.e., the proposition). As such, evidentiality can be deconstructed into three different relations, reflecting the three logically possible interactions between these three elements. A schematic of Waldie’s model is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Waldie’s (2013) Evidential Relations

Any of the relations in Figure 1 can be grammaticized as an evidential. An evidential grammaticizing the perceptual grounding relation encodes how the origo perceives the situation (e.g., whether it is perceived visually or auditorily). An evidential grammaticizing the manner of support relation encodes how the situation supports the prejacent (e.g., via inference or report). And finally, an evidential grammaticizing the perspectival status relation encodes whether the origo believes the prejacent to be true or not.

Waldie is not the only one to recognize that evidentiality is complex and that evidentials can be subclassified. His model is similar to that of Matthewson (in prep), who also deconstructs evidentiality into three component parts. For Matthewson, evidentials can encode evidence type, evidence location, or evidence strength. Abstracting away from the fine details, these can be considered roughly equivalent to Waldie’s perceptual grounding, manner of support, and perspectival status, respectively.
In what follows we consider Siksiká na- in the context of Waldie’s model. We demonstrate that na- encodes neither the perceptual grounding nor manner of support relations, but that it does encode perspectival status.

3. Perceptual Grounding

The relation between the origo and the situation is Waldie calls “perceptual grounding,” and evidentials that encode this relation are sensitive to distinctions between different types of perceptual evidence. This is similar to what Matthewson (in prep) refers to as “evidence type.” As for Siksiká na-, it is compatible with various types of perceptual evidence. It can be used if the evidence is visual or auditory, as shown below.

(2) Anná náóoyiwa akóópis.
    anna na-ooyi-wa akoopis
    DEM EVID-eat.AI-PROX soup
    ‘S/he ate soup.’
    (CONTEXT: “Right now I am telling you ‘She ate soup.’ I saw her, she ate it.”)

(3) Na Rosie iyóóhtookiwa náínihkssi ko’kóyi.
    anna Rosie i-yooht-o-oki-wa na-a-inihki-hs-yi ko’ko-yi
    DEM Rosie IC-hear-TA-3:INCL-PROX EVID-IMPF-sing.AI-CNJ-OBV night-INAN
    ‘Rosie heard us (incl) singing last night.’

In (2), the verb is marked with the prefix na- in a context in which the speaker has visual evidence: s/he witnessed a situation involving person eating soup. In (3), the embedded verb is marked with the prefix na- and here the evidence is auditory: the speaker heard the singing. That na- can be used with either visual or auditory evidence suggests that it does not encode the perceptual grounding relation.

4. Manner of Support

The relation between the situation and the prejacent Waldie calls “manner of support.” Evidentials that encode this relation are elements such as reportative or inferential markers, or elements that encode direct perception (but aren’t sensitive to whether that perception is visual or auditory). This relation is similar to what Matthewson calls “evidence location.”

Regarding Siksiká na-, we observe that na- does not encode the manner of support relation, as it compatible with various manners of support. It can be used if the information is received via a report (4), via inference (5), or via direct perception (6).

(4) Nitohkáániikkoo náhk Rosie náíihpiyihka.
    nit-ohk-waaniist-ok-oo annahk R na-ihpiyi-hk-wa
    1-CONT-say.TA-INV-UNSPEC DEM R EVID-dance.AI-REP-PROX
    ‘Someone told me Rosie danced.’
In (4), the speaker has evidence of Rosie’s dancing via a report. The context for (5) indicates that the evidence is inferential: by seeing flowers in Leo’s garden, the speaker can infer that Leo planted the flowers. Finally in (6), the speaker has direct perceptual evidence: by being a participant in the eating situation, the speaker has first hand knowledge to support the prejacent.

In some of the earlier literature on evidentiality, the manner of support relation is not distinguished from perceptual grounding; both are treated as evidence types. For example, Willett (1988) distinguishes between four types of evidentials: those encoding personal experience, direct evidence, indirect evidence, and hearsay (see also Speas 2004a). We follow Waldie (2013) and Matthewson (in prep) in adopting a more nuanced view. To this end, note that that in (4) na- is used in combination with a reportative suffix –(yii)hk. (Another example of this is found in (19) below). That these two evidentials can co-occur is not surprising if we assume that the category of evidentiality can be deconstructed. By enriching the typology of evidentials as Waldie and Matthewson have done, we predict that different types of evidentials could co-occur.

5. Perspectival Status

Typologies such as those developed by Willett (1988) and Speas (2004a) do not permit the inclusion of na- in the class of evidentials, as it encodes neither a particular type of evidence nor the way in which the evidence was acquired. In fact, much of the literature on evidentiality only considers markers of evidence type or evidence source (e.g., Weber 1986, de Haan 2001, James et al. 2001). Waldie’s model is more inclusive: evidentials encoding the perspectival status relation encode the quality of evidence, rather than the type or source of evidence. This relation corresponds to what Matthewson calls “evidence strength,” and it is what we propose is encoded by na-. Similar to the “best possible grounds” evidential =mi found in Cuzco Quechua and described by Faller (2002), we propose that na- signals that the origo has conclusive evidence to support the truth of the prejacent. In what follows, we discuss three distributional facts about na- that support this proposal.

5.1 Embedding under Propositional Attitude Verbs
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The first generalization that supports the claim that na- encodes perspectival status is that it can be embedded under the propositional attitude verb meaning “know” but not under those meaning “think” or “(don’t) believe”, as shown by the contrast between (7) and (8)-(9). Under the traditional definition of knowledge as justified true belief, the matrix verb “know” requires that there be some justification that its complement be true. The contribution of na- is to assert that the knowledge holder (the origo) has such justification in the form of conclusive evidence for the prejacent. The impossibility of complements containing na- embedded under “think” and “(don’t) believe” is attributable to an incompatibility between the propositional attitude and the evidence strength in the complement.  

(7) Nitssksíni’pa anna imitááwa náísiksiipiwa ni John.  
    nit-ssksini-’p-wa anna imitaa-wa na-siksip-yii-wa anni J  
    1-know.TI-1:NAN-PROX DEM dog-PROX EVID-bite.TA-DIR-PROX DEM J  
    ‘I know the dog na- bit John.’

    nit-ik-aanistsi’taki-wa anna imitaa-wa aahk-siksip-yii-wa anni J  
    1-INTNS-think.AI-PROX DEM dog-PROX MOD-bite.TA-DIR-PROX DEM J  
    ‘I think the dog (*na-) bit John.’

(9) Nimaatsíímai’taki matónni (*na)iksóksinikhssi.  
    nit-maat-ii-omai’taki matonni ik-sok-inihki-hs-yi  
    1-NEG-IC-believe.AI yesterday INTNS-good-sing.AI-CONJ-OBV  
    ‘I don’t believe that we (*na-) sang well yesterday.’

The fact that na- cannot appear in the complement of propositional attitude verbs such as “think” or “(don’t) believe” supports the claim that it encodes the perspectival status relation. Under our proposal, na- signals that the origo has conclusive evidence to support the truth of the prejacent. Having conclusive evidence is consistent with knowing but not with thinking or not believing.

5.2 Veridical Contexts

The second distributional restriction on na- that supports the proposal that it signals that the origo has conclusive evidence to support the truth of the prejacent is that it is restricted to veridical contexts, i.e., contexts in which there is an entailment of truth about the proposition (cf., Zwarts 1995; Giannakidou 1998). The consequence is that na- can only appear in clauses with a particular illocutionary force. It is licit in clauses with assertive force (i.e., declarative affirmative statements), as in (10).

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2 There is a second difference between (7) and (8)-(9). Only “know,” the matrix verb in (7) is factive. However, this cannot be the source of contrast between these examples because na- can also appears in the complement of non-factive matrix verbs, e.g. “hear” (3) and “say” (4).
“The boys saw her dog.”

However, *na-* is not possible in clauses that have a negative force, i.e., clauses that are negated at the clausal level, as in (11). These contrast with clauses with predicate negation, which as shown in (12) permit *na-* . Thus it appears that *na-* cannot appear in the scope of negation (i.e., a non-veridical environment), but it can scope over negation. This is consistent with the characterization of *na-* as encoding the perspectival status relation; *na-* cannot express the relation between the origo and the prejacent if the prejacent scopes over *na-* .

(11) (*Na)máát siksi píiwaatsiks.
    maat-siksi-yii-wa-atiski
    NEG-bite.TA-DIR-PROX-NONAFF
    ‘S/he didn’t (*na-) bite him/her.’

(12) Náísayinakowa.
    na-sa-inako-wa
    EVID-NEG-visible.II-PROX
    ‘It was *na-* invisible.’

In (13) we see that *na-* is also ungrammatical in clauses with interrogative force, such as yes/no questions. This is indeed an illocutionary force restriction. In §6 we will discuss questions that don’t have interrogative force – namely echo questions – and these permit *na-* . In (14) we see that *na-* is also ungrammatical in clauses with directive force, i.e., imperative clauses.

(13) Na Leo (*na-)ikatái’sstsimaahkatsiiwaatsiksí ni Rosie?
    anna L kata’- sstsimaahkat-yii-wa-atiski anni R
    DEM L INTERR-hire.TA-DIR-PROX-NONAFF DEM R
    ‘Did Leo (*na-) hire Rosie?’
    CONTEXT: You want to know if Leo hired someone for the stables.

(14) (*Na)kippóóhkááhkana anomoomokit amo si’kaana.
    kipp-noohk-waahkan-omo-oki-t amo si’kaan-wa
    please-please-sew-TA-2:1-IMP DEM blanket-PROX
    Intended: ‘Please (*na-) sew this blanket for me.’

This section has shown that *na-* is restricted to veridical contexts, in which the truth of the prejacent is entailed. The generalizations are summarized in Table 1.

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3 We follow Searle and Vanderveken (2005), who propose clauses that are negated at the clausal level (i.e., those in which negation is in CP and scopes over the whole clause) have a unique and complex illocutionary force.
Table 1. Distribution of na- according to Veridicality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Veridical</th>
<th>Illocutionary force</th>
<th>na- permitted?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assertive force</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-veridical</td>
<td>Negative force</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interrogative force</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Directive force</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Irrealis Contexts

The third distributional restriction on na- is that it is banned from irrealis contexts, i.e., contexts in which the prejacent does not reference a real-world situation. This restriction does not strictly speak to the evidential relation between the origo and the prejacent, but it does show that na- can only be used with real-world situations.

In Blackfoot, ir/realis contrasts are correlated with different clause types, and only those clause types that are realis permit na-. Matrix declarative clauses (referred to as “independent order” clauses in the Algonquianist tradition) are realis and permit na-, as observed in examples (1), (2), (5), (6), (10), and (12) above. Subordinate clauses partition into two types: conjunct and subjunctive. Conjunct clauses are the default subordinate clause type. They can be subdivided according to whether they have the irrealis marker aahk- on the verb or not. Those without aahk- permit na-, as shown in (15). Those that have aahk- cannot be used with na-, as shown in (16).

(15) Ííssksinima náóksisawaatahsi ni oksíssti.  
    ii-ssksini-m-wa na-oksisawaat-a-hs-yi anni w-iksiss-yi 
    IC-know.TI-3:INAN-PROX EVID-visit.TA-DIR-CONJ-OBV DEM 3-mother-OBV 
    ‘S/he knows that we (incl) visited her mother.’

(16) Nitsíksstaataw na Jaani (*ná)áhksikossi amo atsinayíí.  
    nit-iksstaat-a-wa anna J aahk-sikohsi-hs-yi amo atsinayi-yi 
    1-want.TA-DIR-PROX DEM J MOD-melt.TI-CONJ-OBV DEM fat-INAN 
    intended: ‘I want John to (*na-) melt this fat.’

The subjunctive clause type is irrealis: it is used with present time conditionals or future-oriented hypothetical situations (Louie 2012). Subjunctive clauses do not permit na-, as shown in (17).

(17) (*Na)ikkámaistoosi na Jaani ...  
    ikkam-waist-oo-si anna J 
    if-by.spkr-go.AI-SBJN DEM J  
    ... yáákohtsopowahtsi’satawa annisk ihtáóhpommao ’pi. 
    yaak-oht-sopowahst’s-at-a-wa annisk iahtoahtpommao’p-yi 
    FUT-CONT-ask-TA-DIR-PROX DEM money-INAN 
    ‘If John (*na-) comes, we will ask him about the money.’

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In this section we demonstrated that *na-* is restricted to clause types that are realis. This is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of *na-* across Clause Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause types</th>
<th><em>na-</em> permitted?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Realis contexts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent clauses(^5)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realis conjunct clauses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Irrealis contexts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrealis conjunct clauses</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive clauses (Imperative clauses)(^6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 Summary

In this section, we have argued that *na-* encodes the perspectival status relation in Waldie’s (2013) model of evidentiality. Specifically, we claimed that *na-* signals that the origo has conclusive evidence that a past time situation indeed occurred. We discussed three distributional facts about *na-* that support this proposal. Our findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of *na-*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propositional Attitude verbs</th>
<th><em>na-</em> is permitted</th>
<th><em>na-</em> is not permitted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“know”</td>
<td>“think”</td>
<td>“(don’t) believe”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilocutionary force</td>
<td>Assertive force</td>
<td>Negative force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interrogative force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clause types</td>
<td>Independent clauses</td>
<td>Irrealis conjunct clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realis conjunct clauses</td>
<td>Subjunctive clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperative clauses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Epistemic Modality vs. Evidentiality

In the preceding section, we presented distributional evidence to support our proposal that *na-* encodes the perspectival status relation, signalling that the origo has conclusive evidence about a past time situation. In most cases, having conclusive evidence goes hand in hand with being certain, and to this point we have not distinguished between these two. What reason do we have for treating *na-* as an evidential, as opposed to an epistemic modal that encodes speaker certainty?

\(^5\) Frantz (1991, 2009) identifies another clause type he designates as “unreal.” This is in fact a derivative of the independent clause type and is realis, as it is used in past-time contexts in which the speaker is certain of the outcome. These types of clauses permit *na-* (cf. Bliss 2013).

\(^6\) Imperative clauses also qualify as irrealis (cf. Han 2000) and as shown in §5.2, they also do not permit *na-*.
Here is where our proposal diverges from Waldie (2013). For Waldie, a marker of speaker certainty (i.e., an epistemic modal) fits within the typology of evidentials, as markers of the perspectival status relation. However, we propose that the content of na- is more specifically evidential in character, and that it is distinguishable from “pure” epistemic modals. Although evidential and epistemic modal notions most often overlap, if they are indeed distinct categories, then we should be able to tease apart markers that signal “I am certain” from those that signal “I have conclusive evidence.” Regarding na- the prediction is that if na- is an evidential, then it could be used in contexts in which the origo has evidence but is nevertheless uncertain. Conversely, if na- is a modal, then it could be used in contexts in which the origo is certain but lacks evidence. In what follows we discuss two observations that show that first prediction is borne out. As such, na- can be characterized as an evidential but not a “pure” epistemic modal.

6.1 Echo Questions

The first observation is that na- is permitted in echo questions, as shown in (18) below.

(18) Náóksa’siwaatsiksi?
    na-okska’si-waatsksi
    EVID-run.AI-3SG.NONAFF
    ‘He na- ran?’
CONTEXT: You are surprised to hear that Leo ran, in spite of his injuries.

Recall from §5.2 that na- is not typically permitted in yes/no questions, in which the speaker is requesting information. However na- is permitted in echo questions, where the speaker is seeking confirmation rather than information. We assume that echo questions pattern like rhetorical questions insofar as they are not a request for information; rather they express surprise, amazement, or a lack of clarity (cf. Adger 2003). Moreover, following Han (2002), we assume that rhetorical questions (and likewise echo questions) have assertive rather than interrogative force. In the context in which an echo question such as (18) is licensed, the speaker has evidence to support the truth of the situation (e.g., s/he may have witnessed it, or heard about it from a reputable source), but is incredulous. As such, the fact that na- can appear in echo questions supports our prediction: na- can be used to signal evidence strength without signalling certainty. It is an evidential, and not a pure epistemic modal.

6.2 Cancellability

The second observation is that, although clauses with na- most often come with an entailment of speaker certainty, it turns out that certainty is cancellable, as shown in (19).

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7 This is not to suggest that evidentials do not have modal semantics. Our proposal leaves open the possibility that evidentials such as na- are a subtype of modals and have modal semantics. In this paper we don’t take a stand on this issue, but see Matthewson (2011) and references therein for a modal treatment of evidentials.
(19) *Nitóóhtsimaa na Rosie náihpiiyihk ...*

nit-yoohtsimaa anna R na-ihpiyi-yiihk
1-hear.AI DEM R EVID-dance.AI-REP

... *Nimáátohkomai’tsi’pa.*

nit-maat-ohk-omai’tsi-’p-wa
1-NEG-CONT-believe.TI-1:INAN-PROX

‘I heard that Rosie na- danced … but I don’t believe it.’

CONTEXT: A reputable source told you, but Rosie hasn’t danced in a long time.

As is clear from the context for (19), there is good evidence to support the truth of the proposition (i.e., the speaker received a report from a reputable source), but the speaker has is nevertheless uncertain or incredulous, here because it has been a long time since Rosie last danced.

As with echo questions, contexts such as these allow us to tease apart the evidential contribution of na- from the usually entailed speaker certainty. Speaker certainty is not a necessary condition for na-, indicating that na- is not an epistemic modal.

The fact that sentences such as (18) and (19) express incredulity or surprise may suggest that na- marks mirativity, a notion closely related to evidentiality (e.g., deLancey 1997). Peterson (2010) notes that mirativity may be parasitic on other grammatical categories such as evidentials, and may arise only in particular grammatical environments. In the data set presented here, this seems a plausible characterization of na-; in a subset of the environments in which na- occurs, the resulting clause has a mirative flavour to it. However, whether mirativity is indeed part of meaning component of na- or whether these particular contexts simply lend themselves to a mirative interpretation is yet unclear.

7. **Evidentiality and Person**

In this section, we discuss the interaction between evidentiality, person, and temporality. In §7.1 we demonstrate that, syntactically, na- forms a natural class a set of person prefixes, and in §7.2 we speculate about the consequence of this for the semantics of na-.

7.1 **A Syntactic Natural Class**

As observed throughout this paper, na- appears at the left edge of the polysynthetic verbal complex. This is also the position occupied by a set of person prefixes; na- and the person prefixes are in complementary distribution, as shown below.

(20) a. *Nitókska’si.*

nit-okska’si
1-run.AI

‘I ran.’

b. *Nanítókska’si.*

na-nit-okska’si
EVID-1-run.AI

intended: ‘I ran.’
(21) a. Kitókska’si.  
    kit-okska’si  
    2-run.AI  
    ‘You ran.’  

b. *Kitnáokska’si.  
    kit-na-okska’si  
    2- EVID -run.AI  
    intended: ‘You ran.’

In (20) and (21), we see that na- cannot co-occur with the 1st person prefix nit- or the 2nd person prefix kit-. The consequence of this is that na- cannot be used in sentences with 1st or 2nd person event participants. However, this does not mean that na- is restricted to sentences with 3rd persons only. As we saw in (6) above, na- can be used in sentences with an inclusive (“you and I”) subject, as these don’t employ the person prefixes. Moreover, in a restricted set of morphosyntactic environments, there is also a 3rd person prefix ot-, and in these contexts na- is not permitted, as shown below.

(22) a. Nitóóhtoawa  
    nit-yooht-o-a-wa  
    1-hear-TA-DIR-PROX DEM  
    “I heard the baby crying.”

b. *Nitóóhtoawa  
    nit-yooht-o-a-wa  
    1-hear-TA-DIR-PROX DEM  
    intended: “I heard the baby crying.”

In (22a), the ot- prefix is required on the subordinate verb, and here na- is not permitted. This demonstrates that the distribution of na- with respect to the person prefixes is morphosyntactically conditioned; na- is permitted only when the person prefixes are not.

Moreover, na- and the person prefixes have the same clause-typing restrictions. Recall from §5.3 that na- is banned from clause types that are irrealis (subjunctive, imperative, and irrealis conjunct clauses). In fact, the person prefixes nit-, kit-, and ot- are also banned from these clause types (cf. Bliss 2013).

As for the syntactic position of the person prefixes, they are argued to occupy the canonical subject position, Spec, IP (cf. Bliss 2013, and references therein). Given the complementarity of the person prefixes and na-, it is reasonable to assume that na- occupies this position too. This is supported by the fact that na- encodes temporality (i.e., it is used only in reference to past time situations). Following Blain and Déchaine (2006, 2007), we assume that evidentials with temporal force are in realized in the IP domain.

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8 See Bliss (2013) for a detailed description about the distribution of ot-.  
9 An alternative analysis is that na- occupies a different position than the person prefixes but they compete for a single slot in the verb’s morphological template, and a post-syntactic spell-out restriction prevents na- and the person prefixes from co-occurring. Spell-out restrictions of this sort have also been proposed for Blackfoot’s agreement morphology (Bliss 2013) and direct/inverse morphology (Bliss et al. 2014). Which analysis better captures the facts about na- is a question we leave for future research.
7.2 A Semantic Natural Class

In the preceding section we saw that the person prefixes and $na$- are in complementary distribution, show the same clause-typing restrictions, and occupy the same syntactic position. As such we can think of $na$- and the person prefixes forming a paradigm, as in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nit-</td>
<td>1st person event participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kit-</td>
<td>2nd person event participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ot-</td>
<td>3rd person event participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na-</td>
<td>??</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Although a paradigm is a morphosyntactic object, its existence has consequences for semantics. In particular, if a paradigm is a list of related items, then we predict the items in a paradigm to be related to each other in terms of meaning. What does $na$- have in common with the person prefix, meaning-wise?

First, we observe that $na$- and the person prefixes share at least one meaning component: they both encode temporality. That $na$- encodes temporality is evidenced in its restriction to past-time situations. And as for the person prefixes, they are also temporally restricted. Bliss and Gruber (to appear) argue that the person prefixes are restricted in reference to a temporal stage of an individual, or an individual at a given point in time (as opposed to the individual in the abstract, in their maximal temporal extendedness). The details of Bliss and Gruber’s proposal are beyond the scope of this paper, but the generalization is that both $na$- and the person prefixes have in common at least one aspect of their meanings: the encoding of temporality.

The question is whether they have in common other meaning components as well. Of course, the person prefixes also encode person features (speaker / addressee / other) in addition to temporality. Can we consider the evidential component of $na$- to be a person feature of sorts? Speas (2004b) suggests exactly that. She proposes that evidential markers can be considered a type of person agreement, but whereas person agreement references nominal arguments, evidentials reference “world arguments.” Along these same lines, we speculate that in Blackfoot, the person prefixes reference event participants and $na$- references a discourse participant, namely the origo. The details of how precisely to model this remains yet unclear, but we believe this is a promising line of inquiry.

8. Conclusions

In summary, in this paper we have argued that the Siksiká prefix $na$- is an evidential marker and we have situated it in Waldie’s (2013) typology of evidentials as a marker of the perspectival status relation. We have shown that $na$- does not encode other evidential relations such as perceptual grounding (e.g., whether the evidence is visual or auditory) or manner of support (e.g., whether the evidence was acquired via direct experience,
inference, or report). In terms of perspectival status, we proposed that na- signals that the origo has conclusive evidence about a past time situation. We provided distributional evidence in support of this claim: it must be embedded under factive predicates, it is restricted to veridical contexts, and it is banned from irrealis contexts. We argued that, although na- is typically used in contexts in which the speaker is certain about the truth of the proposition, this is not a necessary condition on na-, indicating that it is indeed an evidential and not a “pure” epistemic modal. We concluded with a discussion on the interaction of na- and person features. We saw that na- forms a syntactic natural class with the person prefixes in Blackfoot, and we proposed that these items for a semantic natural class too. We speculated that evidentiality may be considered a type of person feature, one that encodes the origo as a distinct person.

References


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