

Narrative imperfective uses of Classical Armenian reporting verbs

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1. The Classical Armenian reporting verbs (e.g. *asel* ‘say’, *grel* ‘write’, etc.) demonstrate preference for imperfective tenses (Present and Imperfect) across the early classical texts. This tendency holds true for the description of speech events localized in the past (1–3).

- (1) *Ard* *ibrew* *lu-an* *mardik=n* *sks-an* *cical-el* *z=ban-iwk'=n*
Then when hear-AOR.3PL people=DEF begin-AOR.3PL laugh-INF OBJ=word-INSTR.PL=DEF
z=or *as-ac'*, *sks-an* *xaws-el* *ənd* *nma*
OBJ=which say-AOR.3SG begin-AOR.3PL speak-INF with she.DAT.SG
ew ***as-en***: «...
and **say-PRES.3PL**

“When the people heard this they began to laugh at the words that she had said. They began to speak to her and **said**:...” (Agat’angelos, *History of the Armenians*).

- (2) *Z=or-oc'* *ew* *margare-i=n* *isk* *gov-eal*
OBJ=which-GEN.PL and prophet-GEN.PL=DEF but praise-PST.PTC
z=imastut'own=n, ***as-ēr*** *c'=omn* *ayspēs*: «...
OBJ=wisdom=DEF **say-IMPF.3SG** to=certain.DAT.SG thus

“In praise of the wisdom of such persons, the prophet **said** to one of them as follows: «...” (Koriwn, *The Life of Mashtots*).

- (3) *K'anzi* *minč' č'ew* *ēin* *erkin-k'* *ew* *erkir*, *Zruan* *mec=n* *Astuac*
for before be.3PL heaven-NOM.PL and earth Zruan great God
yašt *ar'n-ēr* *z=hazar* *am* *ew* ***as-ēr***: «...
sacrifice make-IMPF.3SG OBJ=1000 year and **say-IMPF.3SG**

“For before heaven and earth existed, the great god Zruan had been making sacrifices for a thousand of years and **said/had been saying**: [“Let I have a son, named Ormizd, who would create heaven and earth.”] (Elišē, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*).

The imperfective morphology of reporting verbs can spread leftwards if a reporting verb, introducing the direct speech, concludes a series of predicates sharing the subject (a speaker). The example (4) is particularly telling in view of the adverb *valvalaki* ‘suddenly; at once’, characteristic for achievement predicates and yet occurring along with the imperfective verb form *hastatēr* ‘was affirming’.

- (4) *ew* *andēn* *valvalaki* *erdm-amb* ***hastat-ēr*** *ew* ***as-ēr***: «...
and then suddenly oath-INSTR.SG **affirm-IMPF.3SG** and **say-IMPF.3SG**

“...and then he immediately **affirmed** it with an oath and **said**: «...” (Elišē, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*).

2. In Classical Armenian, the subordinative conjunction (*e*)*t'ē* ‘that’ (5) can function as a facultative recitative complementizer introducing the direct speech (6). It is parallel to the use of Ancient Greek subordinative conjunction and recitative complementizer *ὅτι*. Arguably Armenian (*e*)*t'ē* and

Greek *ὅτι* always mark the indirect speech and demonstrate a special case of subclausal indirect-to-direct switching when they are used to introduce the direct speech.¹

- (5) *K'anzi asac' t'ē č'=ik' iwr ordi or*
 for say.AOR.3SG that not=certain.3PL own son which
hiš-ic'ē z=anun nora
 remember-PRES SUBJ.3SG OBJ=name he.GEN.SG

“For he **said that** he has no son who would remember his name.” (2*Sam.* 18:18)

- (6) ...*surb awetaran-aw=n erdn-uin ew as-ēin, et'ē* «...
 Holy Gospel-INSTR.SG=DEF swear-IMPF.3PL and say-IMPF.3PL that

“They swore on the Holy Gospel and **said**: «...” (Elišē, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*)

3. In the present talk, I will investigate correlations between the uses of the indicative tense forms (Present, Imperfect, Aorist) of *asel* ‘to say’ and reporting modes (direct, indirect) taking into account the potential role of conjunction/complementizer (*e*)*t'ē* as a marker of the subclausal indirect-to-direct switching. The study is based on two early classical texts: *The Gospel of Matthew* and Eznik of Kolb’s *On God*.² Each of these texts, belonging to the formative age of the Armenian literary tradition, are bound to specific philological complexities that reflect in the research data.

4. The neutralization of aspectual and temporal features of reporting verbs, introducing the direct speech, may be considered as the first step towards their grammaticalization into discourse operators. The recursive nature of this phenomenon can be illustrated by Gr. ἴν ‘indeed’ akin to Arm. *asel*³ and Gr. φήμι ‘say’ akin to Arm. *bam, bas* and *bay*, fossilized forms of **bal* ‘id.’

- (7) *zi k'ezēn isk asac'-er bas*
 for you.ABL.SG though say-AOR.2SG RECIT (*say.PRES.2SG)
y=erkr-ē=n y=ašxarh-ē=n Čen-ac' emk'...
 from=land-ABL.SG=DEF from=realm-ABL.SG=DEF Čen-GEN.PL be.PRES.1PL

“...for you yourself have **said**: «**Indeed** we are from the land of the realm of the Čenk’...
 (*Buzandaran*; trans. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories*, 1989)

Example (8) is demonstrative in that the 2 sg. Aorist form of *asel* is followed by the 2 sg. Present tense form of another reporting verb **bal*, which has partly turned into a recitative complementizer but still shows the person agreement with the subject.

¹ Maier, Emar. 2012. Switches between Direct and Indirect Speech in Ancient Greek. In: *Journal of Greek Linguistics* 12/1: 118–139.

² The research is based on the edition of Eznik of Kolb’s *On God* in “Classical Armenian Authors” (vols. 1–2, Antelias: 2003) and the digital edition of the New Testament at the TITUS web-portal (<http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de>). Relevant contexts were verified in the critical editions: Mariès, L. and C. Mercier. 1959. Eznik, *De Deo*. Édition critique du texte arménien. Traduction française, notes et tables, P.O. 27, fasc. 3, 4. Paris; Künzle, B. O. (ed.) 1984. *Das altarmenische Evangelium. Teil I: Edition; Teil II: Lexikon*. Bern.

³ De Lamberterie, Charles. 2012. Homonymie ou polisémie? Combien de mots H en grec ancien? In: Alain Blanc, Laurent Dubois & Charles de Lamberterie (éds), ΠΟΛΥΜΗΤΙΣ. Mélanges en l’honneur de François Bader. Leuven-Paris: Peeters (*Collection Linguistique* 99): 71–107.