Two left-periphery connectors in Kamas: mirative vs. neutral

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When harvesting the left periphery of utterances in the Kamas text corpus (Gusev et al. 2023), there appear two prominent elements which may be called connective discourse markers because their function is to connect an utterance to previous talk (e.g. Beeching & Detges 2014: 3). One of them is neutral in terms of mirativity and the other one carries a visual-evidential, mirative meaning. The first one, *dĭgəttə* 'then' (also shortened *dĭttə*), is formally a demonstrative pronoun with an ablative case ending and a possessor suffix of the 3rd person singular: *dĭ-gət-tə* 'this-ABL-3SG', literally roughly 'from her/his this'. This connector is fully lexicalized, it does no longer agree with the subject of the utterance in person or number, but bears invariably the PX3SG (1a, b). The mirative connector is a nonfinite form of the verb *ku-* 'see, find' with a locative case ending and a possessor suffix, cross-referencing the subject (2a, b). This connector is less lexicalized, it still agrees. Another indicator of different grades of lexicalization is that the first connector survived in the speech of the reactivated last speaker, but the second occurs exclusively in the older texts. Formally it does not differ from conditional or temporal subordinate clauses built with the same participle in locative case and possessor suffix (3), but in connector function it appears always without any overt constituents or circumstantials. Constructions of the type "when they looked/as they saw …" are frequent in narratives, usually introducing a new scene or a new referent in a scene from the perspective of a given protagonist. They belong to a wider type of *pre-mirative* contexts from which mirative markers may arise (Skribnik 2023). Mirativity entails notions ranging from sudden discovery until new (relevant) information (Aikhenvald 2012: 473). The connective discourse marker is of course not the only way to express such a situation. Equivalent constructions with finite verbs can be observed in Kamas as well as cross-linguistically. Judging from the occurences in the Kamas texts, the two connectors occur in complementary distribution: once a narrative is continued with *dĭ(gə)ttə*, the seeing event is expressed with a finite verb (4). The Kamas mirative connector has an areal parallel in the Xakas form *kör-ze-*, formally a conditional form of the verb *kör-* 'see, look', inflected for person and number (5).

(1) a. ***dĭgəttə***   *kambi*   *nen-i*   *šü-nə.*
         then   go.PST   burn-CV   fire-LAT
         '[The hare cut its nose on the steppe grass.] Then it went to the wildfire.'
         (AA_1914_Hare_flk.003)

     b. ***dĭgəttə***   *ťabəro-bi-iʔ.*
         then   wrestle-PST-PL
         '[The girl clinged to the boy.] Then they wrestled.' (AA_1914_Brothers_flk.066)

(2) a. ***ku-bi-n-də***   *ular*   *talə-j*   *ńeʔbd-ö-leʔ.*
         see-PTCP-LOC-3SG   sheep   rupture-CV   tear-ITR-CV
         '[The man went to the corral.] When he looked/As he saw a sheep is torn into pieces.' (AA_1914_Corpse_flk.059)

     b. ***ku-bi-n-dən***   *bozeraʔ*   *ine-zəbi*   *aləp*   *šon-namna.*
         see-PTCP-LOC-3PL   foxy.red   horse-ADJ   hero   come-DUR.PRS
         '[The two boys sit at the side of the road.] When they looked/as they see a hero with a foxy red horse was coming.' (AA_1914_Brothers_flk.020)

(3) *tăn   ine-l   **ku-bi-ńi**   nörbə-li-m*
2SG   horse-2SG   see-PTC-LOC.1SG   say-FUT-1SG
'When I see your horse I will tell you' (Klumpp 2002: 129)

(4) ***dĭttə*** *ku-bi: teʔme-bə   saj   băppi*
then see-PST   rope-ACC.3SG   off   cut.PST
'[He let himself down on a rope.] Then he saw: [the other man] cut off his rope.'
(AA_1914_Raven_flk.009)

(5) **Кӧрзе,** вокзал істінде милиционер пастыр чӧрче, …
Kör-ze, *vokzal   istinde   milicioner pastyr   čör-če*
look-COND station   inside.LOC policeman go.CV   move-PRS
'[An illiterate old woman at the train station, she has no idea where tickets are sold.]
When (s)he looked: a policeman was going around inside the station'
(https://khakas.altaica.ru/, 20.01.2024)

The talk has two goals. It is argued that the connector *kubi*-LOC.PX should be understood as a mirative operator, thereby adding connectors to the class of possible evidential-mirative expressions, cf. Skribnik & Kehayov (2018: 531): "The main sources of evidential extensions in Uralic are expressions of modality, parenthetical clauses with cognition and speech verbs, and past tense forms". Based on constructions of the type "when protagonist looks/as protagonist sees: …" from several Siberian languages, it will be shown that the Kamas operator is a case of pragmatization (possibly followed by lexicalization) on the left periphery of the clause. The second goal is to compare the two connectors to other left-periphery elements like conjunctions, subordinated clauses, adverbs, and discourse particles, in order to determine their status as clausal or extra-clausal elements (Kaltenböck et al. 2016).

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