

From quotation to concession: The case of East Circassian

Ksenia Ershova & Itamar Francez
University of Chicago

kershova@uchicago.edu, ifrancez@uchicago.edu

Concessive and contrastive connectives like *although* and *but* convey commitment to the truth of the complement and matrix clause and a contrast between them (Koenig 1991, Winter & Rimon 1994, inter alia). This talk presents a contrastive adverbial found in East Circassian (or Kabardian, Northwest Caucasian), exemplified in (1), which is headed by the adverbial form of the quotative verb *ž'əʔe* 'say', henceforth the "quotative concessive".

- (1) [[*deš^w* *wədopše*] *ž'ə-p-ʔ-u*]
 good 2SG.ABS.climb.PRS PREV-2SG.ERG-say-ADV
ž'əyem *wə-de-mə-pše*
tree.OBL 2SG.ABS-LOC-NEG-climb
'Although you think you climb well, don't climb the tree.'

This adverbial diverges from more familiar concessive and contrastive connectives in intriguing ways. Its use does not commit the speaker to the truth of its complement, it cannot modify positive indicative sentences, and it is a strictly matrix or root phenomenon. The quotative concessive, furthermore, gives rise to three inferences (the full talk provides more evidence and arguments):

- (a) Attenuated concession: The speaker entertains, but does not commit to, the truth of the complement of 'say'.
(b) Prevention: The speaker wants to prevent the potential eventuality described in the matrix clause.
(c) Pretext denial: The speaker denies a link between the attributed belief and the realization of the potential eventuality.

Familiar concessives can express pretext denial when modifying non-assertions, but always express full, rather than attenuated, concession, and need not express prevention. We explicate the nature of these inferences and relate them to the observed distributional restrictions. We argue that the adverbial presupposes that the matrix subject referent is epistemically committed to the complement of 'say', and preferentially committed to the realization of a contextually familiar potential eventuality. The adverbial conventionally selects for modifiers that express speaker dispreference for the realization of this eventuality, leading to the observed restriction against positive indicatives. Attenuated concession and prevention are thus both features of the conventional meaning of a sentence modified by the adverbial. The inference of pretext-denial arises from the interaction of the presupposition of the adverbial and the semantic force of the matrix sentence it modifies.