

Lillooet irrealis: how real is it?*

Jan P. van Eijk
First Nations University of Canada

Abstract: The category ‘irrealis’ has been studied for a large number of languages, but remains controversial in that a number of authors question the validity of this term, or the entire existence of the category, as a viable linguistic concept. This paper discusses ‘irrealis’ with regard to Lillooet, within the context of existing observations on this concept.

Keywords: Lillooet, irrealis, aspect, tense, mood

1 Introduction

Over the years a large number of studies have appeared that are devoted to the concept ‘irrealis,’ i.e. (briefly) the linguistic expression of unrealized or not realizable conditions or situations. As an example we can use English phrases like ‘she was here,’ ‘she is here,’ ‘she will be here,’ all of which refer to situations that have been realized, are realized or will be realized, while ‘if she were here (or, ‘were she here’), she would do it’ or ‘I wish she were here’ refer to situations the realization of which has been rendered moot as they do not reflect real or potential facts but unfulfilled conditions or wishes and the like.

In his paper we investigate ‘irrealis’ with regard to Lillooet, but we also need to study the validity of this concept as that has been called into question in a number of recent studies. We explore this latter issue first, in section 2, before turning to Lillooet in section 3.

2 Problems in conceptualizing irrealis

A workable definition of ‘irrealis’ is given in Trask (1993:147):

A label often applied in a somewhat *ad hoc* manner to some distinctive grammatical form, most often a verbal inflection, occurring in some particular language and having some kind of connection with unreality. Palmer (1968) recommends that this term should be avoided in linguistic theory on the ground that it corresponds to no linguistic content.

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Palmer (1968) has appeared in a second edition as Palmer (2001) to which we will refer henceforth. On p. 148 of that source, Palmer has indeed the following to say on ‘realis’ and ‘irrealis’:

Although they are transparent, it is, perhaps, a little unfortunate that the terms ‘realis’ and ‘irrealis’ have been adopted as grammatical terms in place of the traditional terms ‘indicative’ and ‘subjunctive’.

Palmer’s misgivings are reflected in Bybee (1998:267), “A highly generalized notion such as ‘lacking in reality’ is probably too abstract to be of much communicative use,” Martin (1998:198), “[...] the irrealis category in Mocho [a Mayan language—JvE] is not amenable to a single analysis and is best understood as involving a spectrum of meanings and speaker stances that are neither grammatically nor discursively unified,” Vidal and Manelis Klein (1998:185), “[...] the categorization of all such speech acts [counterfactuals, conditionals, etc. —JvE] as belonging to an irrealis mode is highly variable.”

The above hedgings are neatly summarized in Kinkade’s properly pithy comment “[...] irrealis remains inconsistently defined” (Kinkade 1998:234), followed up in a later work with “[...] linguistic literature has used this term in a variety of ways, often referring to very different phenomena,” and “these papers [in *Anthropological Linguistics*, vol. 40, no. 2—JvE] clearly do not reflect a single notion of irrealis” (Kinkade 2001:189).

We are thus presented with two problems: (a) is it necessary to use the terms ‘realis’ and ‘irrealis’ in addition to ‘indicative’ and ‘subjunctive,’ and (b) is a term like ‘irrealis’ useful (if it is used at all) when it covers a large range of different notions (which also may vary from one language to another).

As for the first point, although Palmer’s book is thoroughly researched and richly detailed, with a plethora of examples from a wide array of languages, I can still see the usefulness of ‘realis’ and ‘irrealis’ in addition to ‘indicative’ and ‘subjunctive,’ as (to me, at least) ‘indicative’ and ‘subjunctive’ refer to the formal aspects of category-marking, while ‘realis’ and ‘irrealis’ refer to their (admittedly broad and richly varied) semantic functions, comparable to, say, the terms ‘nominative’ and ‘accusative’ indicating the formal markers of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ respectively. Furthermore, there is not always an automatic link between ‘indicative’ and ‘realis,’ as in English ‘I move that she is promoted’ (colloquial equivalent of ‘I move that she be promoted,’ see also section 2.1), where indicative ‘is’ signals the irrealis. There may be a firmer (be it as yet not completely established) relation between ‘subjunctive’ and ‘irrealis,” an issue we explore for Lillooet in sections 3 and 4.

The fact that ‘irrealis’ covers a large number of ostensibly different categories or functions (again, also varying from language to language) should not be a problem either. It would be utterly impractical to invent a new term for a certain formal or semantic category for each language where that language covers related but also different categories under that term. (For example, the fact that Russian uses the genitive for the object of a negative construction, as in *ja ne znaju etogu*

človeka ‘I do not know that person’ [literally, ‘I do not know of that person’], while, for instance, German generally does not [except for archaic expressions like *Ich kenne des Menschen nicht*] does not require us to come up with different terms for the genitive in Russian or German. Similarly, Van Eijk and Hess (1986) argue for using ‘noun’ and ‘verb’ for Salish, even though these word classes pattern differently in Salish than in, for example, Indo-European, but still share enough qualities with non-salish languages to not abandon these terms. Finally, Matthewson (2010) sensibly uses the term ‘subjunctive’ for the non-factual and non-indicative paradigm in Lillooet, even though “[...] the St’át’imcets subjunctive differs semantically in interesting ways from European subjunctives” [p. 59].)

Having proposed that the term ‘irrealis’ is indeed useful and that the fact that it may cover a range of notions is not a problem, we need to define what it actually “does” in any language that employs it. Again, Kinkade (1998:234) hits the nail squarely on the head when he states: “It is necessary to distinguish between that which is actually unreal and an irrealis grammatical category.” Kinkade then mentions negatives, questions, conditionals and subjunctives, and references to the future as expressions that refer to unreal situations, but that are not necessarily marked grammatically (morphologically or syntactically) as unreal. (Note that, in contrast to Palmer, he does not automatically associate or equate ‘subjunctive’ [or ‘conditional’] with ‘irrealis.’) Kinkade then concludes his discussion of unreal vs. irrealis by observing that Upper Chehalis does make a distinction between logical and grammatical unreality (the latter marked in Upper Chehalis with the particle *q’at*).

2.1 Formal markers of ‘irrealis’

Extrapolating Kinkade’s comments (at the risk of unintentionally misrepresenting them) to a number of languages not mentioned by him we could say that grammatical marking of the irrealis can also consist of a formally distinct paradigm (as in Latin *moneam* ‘that I warn’ vs. *moneō* ‘I warn’), or the “raiding” of a realis (indicative) paradigm for forms that could not be used in their realis function (as in English ‘if she were here’ [irrealis] vs. ‘she was here’ [realis], with ‘were’ is taken from the realis expressions ‘you were here’ or ‘we were here’), or an unusual syntactic pattern, such as the inversion in ‘had she been here’ (irrealis) vs. ‘she had been here’ (realis).

Probably the clearest examples of irrealis marking are those cases where a past tense and future tense marker are combined in one form, as in English ‘could,’ ‘should’ and ‘would’ (past tense forms of ‘can,’ ‘shall’ and ‘will,’ all with a future reference). Other examples (taken from Jensen 1990 include Sanskrit *a-tar-isy-at* ‘he would cross (*tar*), *a-dhar-isy-at* ‘he would hold (*dhar*),’ both with the past tense marker *a-...-at* and the future tense marker *-isy*, or Georgian *da-v-c’er-di* ‘I (v-) would write (*c’er*) it/them,’ with the future marker *da-* and the past tense marker *-di*.

It should also be observed that sometimes realis and irrealis are not formally distinguished when the ‘indicative’ and ‘subjunctive’ paradigms partially coincide, as in English ‘if she was here’ (realis in ‘if she was here, she should have left that book she borrowed from me’) vs. ‘if she was here’ (irrealis as the colloquial variant of ‘if she were here,’ as in ‘if she was here, she would help us out’). The first use refers to a situation that is truth-testable (she was here or she was not), while the second use refers to a situation that is not, as it merely refers to a hypothetical condition. In Italian, *andiamo* can mean either ‘we go’ (realis) or ‘let’s go’ (irrealis), depending on context. (We clearly have the latter reading in Don Giovanni’s *Andiam! Andiam!*, where he seduces Zerlina into joining him in his private chambers.) The fact that Italian distinguishes indicative/realis from subjunctive/irrealis in other parts of its macro-paradigm argues for maintaining that we have two semantically different, though formally identical, forms of *andiamo*. (There is a partial parallel to the Italian case in English ‘we’re walking’ [instead of ‘let’s keep walking’], as used by a tour guide who needs a group of tourists moving when they are dawdling in front of the art pieces in the museum they are visiting.) Finally, Lillooet *ćaqʷańas* expresses both ‘s/he eats it’ (indicative/realis) and ‘let her/him eat it’ (subjunctive/irrealis). We have the latter reading in *ćaqʷańas ǰu?* (with the general discourse particle ǰu?, which also moves the stress in the preceding word), in a line from Bill Edwards’ story ‘The man who stayed with the bear,’ where a man is chastised by his kinfolk for bringing home a deer from the hunt without sharing it with the others (in violation of strict hunter’s protocol).

Summing up the above, we can say that the realis expresses truth-testable situations, whether those are real (as in ‘she was here’ or ‘she is here’) or as yet unreal (as in ‘she will be here’), while the irrealis expresses non-truth-testable situations (‘I wish she were here’ or ‘had she been here, she would have done it’). Conditionals (basically ‘if’ constructions) can be either realis, as in ‘if you touch me, I’ll scream’ (the truth of your touching me will be tested at some point), or irrealis, as in ‘if you touched me, I’d scream’ (truth not testable). It is for that reason that Leech (1971:110), from whom these examples are taken, classes the first one as a real condition and the second as an unreal condition. (Note also that ‘had she been here,’ quoted above, is rendered as ‘if she had been here’ [unreal condition] in more colloquial English.)

We now apply our observations to Lillooet.

3 Lillooet irrealis

In addition to an indicative and a factual paradigm, Lillooet also employs a subjunctive, which is used in three different ways, of which at least two have a clear irrealis function.¹ In the first place, when the subjunctive is used by itself,

¹ Prefixes are followed by a period [.] in orthographic transcriptions and a hyphen [-] in morpheme-by-morpheme glosses. Clitics are indicated with the underloop [̣], which

without additional morpho-syntactic markers, it expresses an optative mood, as in ‘I (*s.ʔənc.a*) am the one who shot (*q^wúsxit*) him’ (indicative, with zero-marking on *s.ʔənc.a*) vs. *s.ʔənc-ás k^wu.nás* ‘let me be the one to go (*nas*)’ (3sing./subjunctive *-as* on *s.ʔənc*), *x^wʔqz k^w.šiq-i* ‘they did not (*x^wʔqz*) come (*šiq*)’ (literally, there was not the fact (*s-*) of their (*-i*) coming’ (indicative, with zero-marking on *x^wʔqz*) vs. *x^wʔqz-as k^w.q^wətp-su* ‘do not get burnt/scalded’ (‘let it not be the fact of your (*-su*) getting burnt.’ *-as* 3sing./subjunctive), *wáʔ.štu? ʔišəm* ‘he is singing (*ʔišəm*)’ (indicative) vs. *wáʔ-as.štu? ʔišəm* ‘let him (be) sing(ing)’ (subjunctive). For the subjunctive reading of *čáq^wanias* see section 2.

In the second place, the subjunctive is automatically triggered by the enclitic *an* which indicates ‘possibility, surmise,’ as in *tayt-áx^w-an* ‘you (*-ax^w* 2sing./subjunctive) must be hungry (*tayt*),’ vs. *tayt-káx^w.ha* ‘are you hungry?’ (*-kax^w* 2sing./indicative; question marker), *plán-at.an wa? pəlp* ‘it looks like we (*-at* 1plur./subjunctive), vs. *plán-kať wa? pəlp* ‘we are lost already,’ (*-kať* 1plur./indicative), *wáʔ-as.an k^wzúsəm* ‘it looks like he is working (*k^wzúsəm*),’ vs. *wáʔ k^wzúsəm* ‘he is working.’

In the third place, the proclitics *č* ‘if’ and *ʔi* ‘when’ also automatically require the subjunctive, as in *č.ʔiʔwa?-mín-c-ax^w*, *č.s.zaytən-mín-ax^w* [*č*].*s.tám-as k^w.s.cún-ci-n, húy-čkan cunámən-ci-n k^wa.píxəm* ‘if you (*-ax^w*) come along (*ʔiʔwa?*) with (*-mín*) me (*-c*), and you do (*s.zaytən-mín*) everything I tell (*cun*) you, I will teach (*cunámən*) you how to hunt (*píxəm*),’ *ʔi.xin-as* ‘a long time ago’ (*xin* ‘to last a long time’), *ʔi.sitst-as* ‘last night (*sitst*),’ *ʔi.cix^w-wit-as, s.xáw.ʔiʔ.štu?* ‘when they got there, was that ever a surprise (*s.xáw*) for them’ (*cix^w* ‘to arrive there’). Although at first blush, these sentences refer to a real, essentially truth-testable situation (much like Leech’s ‘If you touch me, I’ll scream’) but are combined with a subjunctive, and as such suggest that there is not an automatic link between subjunctive and irrealis, the matter may be more complex than that. We explore this issue further in section 4.

For a far more detailed discussion of the Lillooet subjunctive I refer to Matthewson (2010), which also divides the three functions listed above over nine types of use.

There are also three enclitics which have an irrealis “feel” to them, but might not be irrealis from a Lillooet point of view, since they allow combinations with indicative formations. First of all, there is *kať* (*kať*) which roughly translates as ‘may’ and indicates a potential event in the future, as in *ʔáčxən-ci-čkan kať míta?* ‘I (*-čkan*) will see (*ʔáčxən*) you (*-ci*) again (*míta?*)’ (good-bye expression, possibly calqued from English ‘I’ll be seeing you’), *šalaŋ-c-ás.kať ti.s.qaxa?-lap.a* ‘the dog (*s.qaxa?*) of you folks (*-lap*) may bite (*šalaŋ*) me (*-c*).’ The irrealis “feel” is reinforced when *kať* is combined with *tu?* which indicates that something is definitely over and done with (as in *čək.tu?* ‘it’s all gone,

follows proclitics and precedes enclitics. For these and other morphological markers, see Van Eijk (2013).

finished'). An example of $\text{ᑭᑭ}tu?$ is $qlil\text{-}min\text{-}cih\text{-}as\text{ᑭᑭ}tu?$ 'he might get mad (*qlil*) at (*-min*) you.' (The difference between ᑭᑭ and $\text{ᑭᑭ}tu?$ is largely paralleled by an example like English 'Cigarette smoking may be hazardous to your health' [relatively strong possibility] vs. 'Cigarette smoking might be hazardous to your health' [weaker possibility], as given in Steele 1975:201.)

In addition to ᑭᑭ , Lillooet employs $\text{ᑭ}a$ 'obligation, expectancy,' as in $cuk^w\text{u}\text{ᑭ}án\text{ᑭ}a\text{ᑭ}i?$ 'I (*-ᑭán*) should finish (*cúk^wu*) that (*ᑭi?*),' $\acute{x}zum\text{ᑭ}a\text{ᑭ}ám$ $k^w\text{u}\text{ᑭ}ám\text{x}^w\text{y}áqs\text{-}kát$ 'we should have a big (*ᑭzum*) car (*ᑭám\text{x}^w\text{y}áqs*)' (*-kát* 'our,' *ᑭám* 'antithesis, unfulfilled condition'), and $\text{ᑭ}a$ 'possibility, surmise,' as in $sáma?ᑭa\text{ᑭ}^w\text{u}\text{ᑭ}a\text{ᑭ}^w\text{á}\acute{á}\text{ᑭ}án\text{-}táli$ 'it must have been a white person (*sáma?*) who told (*s.ᑭ^wá}\acute{á}\text{ᑭ}án*) her,' $x^w\text{ᑭ}áz\text{ᑭ}a\text{ᑭ}^w\text{as}\text{ᑭ}^w\text{ᑭ}it\text{ᑭ}^w\text{u}\text{wa?}\text{ᑭ}a\text{ᑭ}^w\text{tám}\text{t}á\text{ᑭ}ám\text{-}s$ 'apparently she did not have many (*x^wᑭit*) belongings (*s.tám}\text{t}á\text{ᑭ}ám*)' (*-s* 'her'). Interestingly, $\text{ᑭ}a$ overlaps semantically with $\text{ᑭ}án$ in that both indicate a speculation about what may be the case. However, while $\text{ᑭ}án$ refers to an almost inevitable conclusion, $\text{ᑭ}a$ refers to a possibility only, as in $wá?as\text{ᑭ}án\text{ᑭ}^w\text{zúsám}$ 'it looks like he is working' vs. $wá?ᑭa\text{ᑭ}^w\text{zúsám}$ 'he must be at work (that's why he is not here).'

The enclitics ᑭᑭ , $\text{ᑭ}a$, $\text{ᑭ}a$ may also combine with forms in the subjunctive, as in $\text{ᑭ}inwat\text{-}wit\text{-}as\text{ᑭᑭ}$ 'I wonder what they (*-wit-as* 3plur./subjunctive) will say' (*ᑭinwat* 'to say what?') vs. $\text{ᑭ}inwat\text{-}wit\text{ᑭᑭ}$ 'what will they (*-wit* 3plur./indicative) say?,' $plan\text{-}at\text{ᑭ}a\text{ᑭ}tu?$ $wá?cix^w$ 'I wish we (*-at* 1plur./subjunctive) were there already (*plan*)' (*cix^w* 'to arrive over there') vs. $plan\text{-}ᑭa\text{ᑭ}a\text{ᑭ}tu?$ 'we (*-ᑭa* 1plur./indicative) should have been there already,' $kanm\text{-}án\text{ᑭ}a$ 'I (*-án* 1sing./subjunctive) don't know what happened to me' (*ᑭánám* 'what happens?') vs. $kanám\text{-}ᑭán\text{ᑭ}a$ 'what happened to me?' (e.g., when a person has fainted, breaks out in blotches, has an allergy') (*-ᑭán* 1sing./indicative). The fact that we have subjunctive forms in combination with ᑭᑭ , $\text{ᑭ}a$, $\text{ᑭ}a$, with a true irrealis function, suggests that these enclitics do not create irrealis forms when they combine with indicative forms. It should be noted in this connection that, although Van Eijk (1997) does not describe the Lillooet enclitics in terms of 'irrealis' (as indicated in Kinkade 2001:194), Van Eijk's translations of these enclitics ('remote future, possibility' for ᑭᑭ , 'possibility, surmise' for $\text{ᑭ}án$ and $\text{ᑭ}a$, and 'obligation, expectancy' for $\text{ᑭ}a$, as repeated above) do suggest an irrealis, on the basis of which Kinkade (2001:195) remarks that ᑭᑭ , $\text{ᑭ}a$ and $\text{ᑭ}a$ "[...] have meanings that are compatible with 'irrealis'."

Matthewson, Rullmann, and Davis (2005) provide an insightful discussion of ᑭᑭ , $\text{ᑭ}a$, $\text{ᑭ}a$, in relation to the resultative combination $ka\text{-}...a$ (labeled 'purely circumstantial' by the authors), assigning two functions ('deontic' and 'irrealis') to $\text{ᑭ}a$ (accordingly divided into $\text{ᑭ}a_1$ and $\text{ᑭ}a_2$), but holding open the possibility of at least a partial unification of these functions (p. 182). For an equally insightful and very detailed discussion of $\text{ᑭ}a$ and $\text{ᑭ}án$, this time in relation to the reportative marker $\text{ᑭ}^w\text{u}?$, I refer to Matthewson, Rullmann, and Davis (2006).

4 Conclusions and outlook

The whole issue of ‘irrealis’ remains a vexingly complex one, as it basically asks the unanswerable question ‘How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck would chuck wood?’ It is therefore understandable that oceans of ink have been spilled on this matter, with some authors blithely using the term, while others seriously question its usefulness. In what follows we briefly touch on two interrelated issues that apply to this problem: (a) the relation of ‘realis’/‘irrealis’ (essentially a type of mood) to ‘tense’ and ‘aspect,’ and (b) the function of the subjunctive in Lillooet.

Unless a language has a completely separate paradigm for the irrealis (much like the subjunctive in Latin), the irrealis may “raid” other parts of the macropradigm, and the past tense seems to be a prime target, as in English “I wish she were here,” “were she here, she would do it” (the latter with both the past tense of “be” and “will,” as commented on in section 2.1). There is also an interesting overlap between aspect and irrealis, in that ‘if she had been here (= had she been here)’ (perfect aspect) can only have an irrealis reading, while ‘if she was here’ (imperfect) can have either a realis or an irrealis reading, as detailed in section 2.1. Similarly to the association between ‘past’ and ‘irrealis’ in English, Steele (1975) proposes that ‘past’ and ‘irrealis’ are linked in Uto-Aztecan. Following Seiler (1971), Steele then uses ‘dissociative’ (which Seiler uses in reference to the optative and the preterit in Greek), to refer to the ‘past’/‘irrealis’ link. On the other hand, Vidal and Manelis Klein (1998) interpret the particles *ga*’ and *ka* in respectively Pilagá and Toba as having a general future reference (without being future tense markers, since neither language marks tense grammatically), the irrealis function implied by contextual inference.

It thus remains to be seen whether ‘irrealis’ is primarily associated with the past or the future (or both, as in English ‘could,’ ‘should,’ ‘would’). We turn to this topic briefly in our comments below, with regard to the subjunctive in Lillooet.

As we have seen in section 3, the Lillooet subjunctive clearly expresses the irrealis in its optative function (i.e., when it is used by itself) and in combination with *añ*, but it seems to express the realis in ‘if’ and ‘when’ situations (i.e., when combined with *ł* or *łi*). However, it is possible that Lillooet ‘if’ and ‘when’ constructions are, from a Lillooet point of view, seen as unreal in as much that the past (*łi*) cannot be reached anymore, while a potential future (*ł*) still falls outside our grasp. We have already commented on the fact that the enclitics *kał*, *ka*, *ka* possibly do not indicate the irrealis when combined with forms in the indicative, in spite of the fact that they generally indicate the irrealis when translated into English (in itself a weak criterion), but probably should be interpreted as expressing the irrealis when combined with forms in the subjunctive.

In a broader cultural linguistic context it should be pointed out that what is interpreted as ‘real’ or ‘unreal’ from an English (and general European-based) point of worldview, might not be interpreted in the same way within a different culture. (To give an idea, beings that within the Western canon are classified as fictional, such as mermaids, ghosts, two-headed serpents and the like, may be very

real within the classificatory systems of other cultures.) For example, Hofling (1998:225) mentions the fact that past-perfect and future-irrealis may be marked in similar ways in Itzaj Maya, and then suggests that this is related to a fact he noted in a previous article; namely that “Maya time is largely cyclical time, in which past time periods (e.g., days) are considered to be equivalent to future time periods in a comparable calendric position” (Hofling 1993). Hofling also, on p. 214 of his 1998 article but quoting from his 1993 effort, mentions that “Itzaj narrative discourse suggests a division between what a person knows from personal experience centered in one’s home and town (the actual), and what is less known, but imaginable, further away in space-time.” (Incidentally, Hofling’s observations on Maya space-time also mesh with Whorf’s (1956:63) observation that in Hopi, events happening at a distant location are not seen as happening “now,” as we will not find out about them until later, so that in a sense distance in location is associated with distance in time. An association between past and future is also suggested in Dutch *vannacht* [1] ‘last night,’ [2] ‘tonight,’ or Lillooet *natx^w*, which means ‘tomorrow’ when used by itself, but is also used in the expression *ʔi.nátx^w-as* ‘yesterday.’)

Of course, issues like these are best explored with fluent speakers of the language in question, who should be encouraged to comment on the forms they provide rather than just deliver them as translations of the English forms put before them. As such, a problem like ‘irrealis’ and the way or ways in which it is marked in any language becomes a powerful argument for involving speakers not only as consultants but also as co-investigators.

In summation, I suggest three areas for further research in connection to ‘irrealis.’ In the first place, and with reference to my remarks above, we need to look deeper into the connection between ‘irrealis’ and tense and aspect, even for a language like Lillooet, of which Van Eijk (1997) claims that it has no tense but that it does have aspect. However, other studies to be consulted in relation to this topic in Lillooet include Glougie (2007) on the difference between the future event indicators *x^wuz* and *kɬ*, and Davis and Matthewson (2003) on the Lillooet enclitic *tuʔ*, which, although it generally describes a completed event, the authors describe neither as a tense nor an aspectual marker but a distal demonstrative adverb, be it one that supports a ‘tensed’ analysis of Lillooet over a tenseless one.

In the second place, although ‘irrealis’ presents itself as a very complex topic (and I for one have only scratched the surface when it comes to Lillooet), the complexity of this topic should not prevent us from investigating it as vigorously as we can. As holds true for all forms of language research, continued exploration of ‘irrealis’ will occasion us to finetune and, where appropriate, revise the theoretical constructs we have set up to describe and analyze human language. For example, whereas Palmer (2001) essentially identifies ‘subjunctive’ with ‘irrealis,’ as mentioned in section 2, Matthewson (2010) cogently argues against such an automatic identification (see also her summaries of this on pp. 59 and 102 of her article). Even if the Lillooet subjunctive in ‘if’ and ‘when’ constructions can be shown to serve the irrealis, and no cases of a subjunctive serving a realis can be found in any language, Palmer’s association of ‘subjunctive’ with ‘irrealis’

is correct, but not, in my view, his identification of these two categories with each other.

Finally, the topic of ‘irrealis’ needs to be investigated within a wider Salish context. Kinkade (2001) is an excellent first attempt at reconstructing the Proto-Salish irrealis, but he also admits (p. 199) that “What had appeared to me to be a rather straightforward reconstruction of an irrealis morpheme in Salish turns out to have some rather messy loose ends.” There have been other studies on irrealis, such as Baier (2010) on Montana Salish, and those referenced by Kinkade (including some that do not use the term ‘irrealis’), but much further work is needed. I hope that this very minor effort is a modest but hopefully interesting contribution to such an endeavour.

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