

Evidentiality in Ninam of Alto Mucajaí

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ABSTRACT: Evidentiality, as a grammatical category, has been identified as a common feature among the languages of the Amazon region, including the Yanomami languages. This paper presents new findings on the evidentiality system used in Ninam of Alto Mucajaí, a Yanomami language located along the banks of the Mucajaí River in Northern Brazil. These findings were obtained through the review of data collected in 1970 and the analysis of data collected between 2021 and 2022. Older data from Ninam indicated that the language had a five-term system and that, fifty years later, it has been reduced to a three-term system. This evidentiality system is composed of VISUAL, HEARSAY, and UNSPECIFIED markers. The appearance and placement of evidentiality markers are affected by tense/aspect morphemes and the presence of adverbs. In addition, evidentiality is a grammatical category exclusively found in the main clause.

KEYWORDS: Yanomami; Ninam; Ninam of Alto Mucajaí; Evidentiality

RESUMO: A evidencialidade, como categoria gramatical, tem sido identificada como uma característica comum entre as línguas da região amazônica, incluindo as línguas Yanomami. Este artigo apresenta novas descobertas sobre o sistema de evidencialidade usado no Ninam do Alto Mucajaí, uma língua Yanomami localizada ao longo das margens do rio Mucajaí, no norte do Brasil. Essas descobertas foram obtidas por meio da revisão de dados coletados em 1970 e da análise de dados coletados entre 2021 e 2022. Dados antigos do Ninam indicaram que a língua possuía um sistema de cinco termos e que, cinquenta anos depois, foi reduzido para um sistema de três termos. Esse sistema de evidencialidade é composto por marcadores VISUAL, REPORTADO e NÃO ESPECIFICADO. A aparência e colocação dos marcadores de evidencialidade são afetadas pelos morfemas de tempo/aspecto e pela presença de advérbios. Além disso, a evidencialidade é uma categoria gramatical encontrada exclusivamente na oração principal.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Yanomami; Ninam; Ninam do Alto Mucajaí; Evidencialidade

1. Introduction

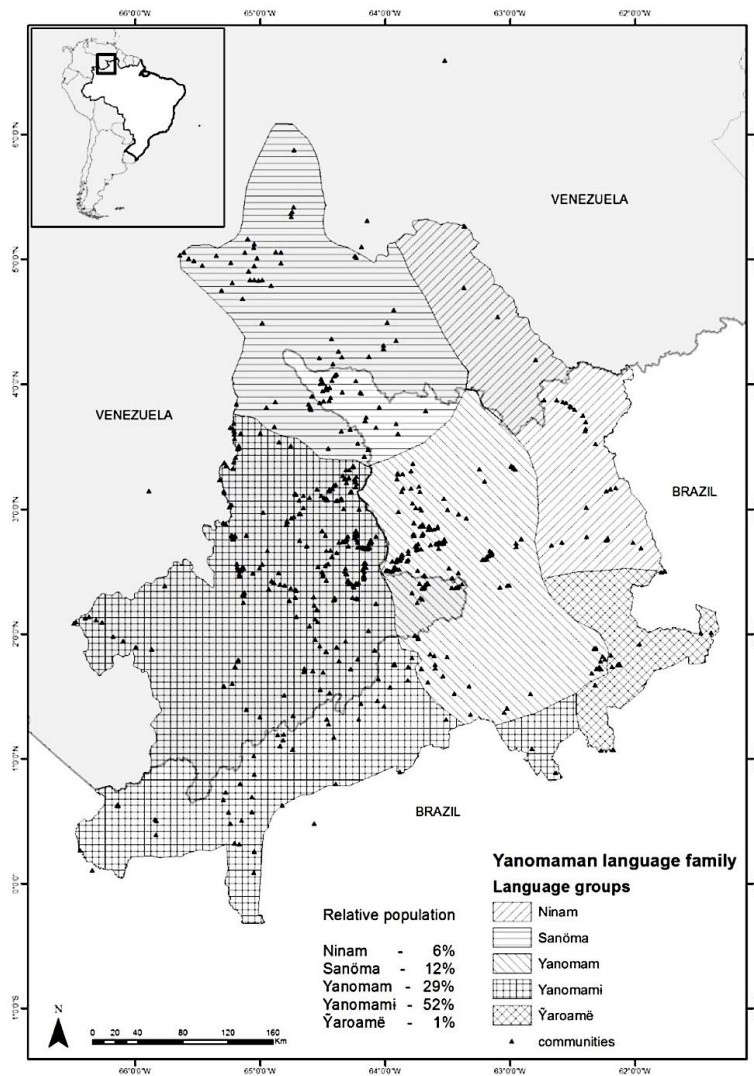
The Yanomami languages have been described as polysynthetic languages (Aikhenvald & Dixon 1999; Ferreira 2017a; Ferreira; Machado & Benfca 2019). This feature becomes apparent in the verbal morphology of Ninam of Alto Mucajaí, a dialect of Ninam. It is one of the smallest groups of the Yanomami family, and it is located along the banks of the Mucajaí River in Northern Brazil. According to Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig (2022), there are roughly 1,030 Ninam speakers in the Amazonian area between Brazil and Venezuela.

The Ninam verb word exhibits five slots on the left side of the verb stem and at least seven slots on the right side. Although the labels for each slot are still under study, the Ninam of Alto Mucajaí data suggest that evidentiality is one of the grammatical categories expressed in the verbal complex. Evidentiality is common to Amazonian society, which believes that everything that happens has an explicit cause; subsequently, it is necessary to state the source of the information (Aikhenvald & Dixon 1998; Aikhenvald 2003).

This paper aims to describe new findings on the evidential system of Ninam of Alto Mucajaí, which in 1970 was initially described as having an evidentiality system of at least five terms. The data used in this study was collected by the author through elicitation between 2021 and 2022. The paper is divided into five sections: §1 Introduction, §2 Evidential systems in Yanomami languages, §3 The evidential system in Ninam of Alto Mucajaí, §4 Evidentials and their correlation with other grammatical categories, and §5 Evidentials at the clause level.

2. Typology of the evidential systems in the Yanomami language

Areal typology studies have demonstrated that a evidentiality, as a grammatical category, is common to the languages of the Amazon area (Aikhenvald & Dixon 1998). Although the languages of the Yanomami family share this particular characteristics, the evidential systems behave differently from language to language.



Map – Current distribution of the Yanomami languages in Brazil and Venezuela (Ferreira 2017: 5)

Yanomama of Papiu, located in the mid-eastern portion of the Yanomami territory, is a dialect of Yanomam, a Yanomami language that presents a complex evidentiality system composed of five terms. According to Ferreira (2017b : 605), the Yanomama speaker differentiates between the experience with the event – first-hand and second-hand information – and means of experience – visual, auditory, and assumption. Table 1 presents the summary proposed by Ferreira (2017b, p. 663).

Table 1. Evidentiality system in Yanomama (Ferreira 2017b: 663)

Speaker experience with the event	Mean of experience	Mechanism of expression
First-hand	Visual	<i>k</i> -words
	Auditory	<i>wãa</i> =
Second-hand	Visual (inference)	= <i>no</i>
	Auditory (report)	<i>e=ãha</i> =
	Thought (assumption)	<i>m</i> -words

Note that Ferreira (2017a) argues that Yanomama has evidentiality morphemes, such as *wãa*= auditory and first hand, but also has constructions that seem to carry implicitly the concept of evidentials. For the author, these constructions are the *k*-words and *m*-words, which refer to complex morphological sequences that begin with *k* or *m*, respectively, and are followed by information about tense, space, mood, or aspect. As observed in the examples (1a) and (1b), in these cases there is no specific morpheme to indicate evidentiality.

- (1) a. *Kihi* *napë* =*pë* =*ni* *yamaki*= *mëra* =*ma*
 that white.person =3PL =ERG 1PL= blunder =CAUS
- =*ri* =*haru* *ku* =*he* =*ni*
 =PFV1 =LOC:upstream COP =3PL =HOD
- ‘Those white persons deceive us down there (+witnessed).’ (Ferreira 2017:657)¹
- b. *Ëhĩ* *napë* =*pë* =*ni* *yamaki*= *mëra*
 ANA white.person =3PL =ERG 1PL= Blunder
- =*a* *ma* =*ma* =*ri* =*kiri* =*ha*
 =PFV.VWL COP.ASS =CAUS =PFV1 =DIR:downriver =HOD
- =*he*
 =3PL
- ‘Those white people deceived us down there (+assumed) (I am not sure why I am saying that, it is just a hunch).’ (Ferreira 2017b: 657)

Xaumatauteri, located near the Marauiá River, is a Yanomami language with a three-term evidentiality system. Ramirez (1994: 316-318) describes the three-term system as EYEWITNESS, NON-EYEWITNESS, and INFERRED evidentials. For the evidential markers, the author describes their

¹ Transcriptions from other sources have been maintained in this section.

occurrences in relation to the different tense markers found in his data and other occurrences. Table 2 presents a summary of the evidentiality system in Xaumatauteri.

Table 2. Evidentials in Xaumatauteri (based on Ramirez 1994: 316-318)

Evidential	Form	Occurrences
<i>Le testimonial</i> – EYEWITNESS	-i	(Pre) hodiernal past Present Auxiliary forms Negative Conjectural verb
<i>Le non-testimonial</i> – NON-EYEWITNESS	no- ... -xi	(Pre) hodiernal past
<i>L'irréel</i> – INFERRED	-pi	(Pre) hodiernal past Present

According to the data presented by Ramirez (1994), these evidential markers occur on the sides of the verb stem. He describes them as having a fixed position attached to the verb; the EYEWITNESS and INFERRED are classified as suffixes, and the NON-EYEWITNESS as a circumfix.

Sanuma, a Yanomami language located alongside the Caura River basin, has a different system composed of EYEWITNESS, VERIFICATION, and SUPPOSITION evidentials. According to Borgman (1990: 165-173), this three-term system presents the evidentials in the same morpheme along with tense and location, which seems more complex than the Xaumatauteri system but similar to Yanomama. Table 3 summarizes the information Borgman (1990) presented regarding the system in Sanuma. Note that some morphemes are similar to the evidentials presented by Ferreira (2017b), c.f. Table 1.

Table 3. Evidential system in Sanuma (based on Borgman 1990)

Evidential	Form	Tense	Description
EYEWITNESS	<i>ku ~ ki ~ ko ~ k</i>	Present tense	It is attached to directional morphemes or location morphemes Placed after the verb
	<i>ke ~ kehe ~ kuhe</i>	Recent past tense	
	<i>kupili~kopili~kipili</i>	Remote past tense	
VERIFICATION	<i>noa~no</i>	Present tense	Placed after the verb
	<i>thai</i>	Recent past tense	
	<i>thali</i>	Remote past tense	
SUPPOSITION	<i>kite</i>	Present tense	Placed after the verb
		Future tense	

Northern Ninam, classified as a dialect of the same language to which Ninam of Alto Mucajaí belongs and, allegedly, the *closest* language to it, distinguishes between two types of evidentials: EYEWITNESS and NON-EYEWITNESS (Gómez 1990: 97). This two-term system differs from the two previously presented systems because it is the only one that presents the evidentials as separate words. According to Gómez (1990: 97), the word *fin* EYEWITNESS “indicates that the action of the verb was witnessed by the speaker”, as shown in example (2). Meanwhile, the word

fire NON-EYEWITNESS “indicates that the action of the verb was not witnessed,” as shown in example (3). Both occur after the verb, which seems to be the usual position for this grammatical category.

- (2) *Ipa* *tə ə* *-təə* *-n* *waika* *ten* ***fin***
 1SG.POSS daughter -1SG -ERG Yanomam marry **WIT**
 ‘My daughter married a Yanomam (witnessed).’ (Gómez 1990: 93)²
- (3) *Təituhu* *hun* ***fire***
 long.ago go.PST **NON.WIT**
 ‘Long ago (he/she) went away (unwitnessed).’ (Gómez 1990: 93)

Yanomama, Xaumatateri, Sanuma, and Northern Ninam share features among the evidentials that they use. Besides the position of the evidentials – mostly the right side of the verb, these four languages also have in common that they present a type of WITNESSED evidential and UNWITNESSED evidential. In addition, it is observed that evidentials are profusely used in the past and present tenses. The major differences are (a) direct experience with the event –as described for Yanomama– and (b) a marker for uncertainty only used in Sanumá for the future tense.

3. Evidential system in Ninam of Alto Mucajaí

Similar to the other Yanomami languages described in the previous section, it is expected that a grammatical sentence in Ninam of Alto Mucajaí, henceforth Ninam, will host a morpheme that indicates the source of information.

3.1. Albright’s (1970) findings and approach

Albright (1970) indicated only three branches of the Yanomami languages – Eastern, Central, and Western. In her paper, the Ninam of Alto Mucajaí group, also called Širišana, only had 135 speakers and it belonged to the Eastern branch. Her paper argues that

Širišana exhibits within the predicate a somewhat complex system of indicating what kind or degree of knowledge the speaker has of the information he is giving, as well as elements which indicate whether he is or is not at the location of occurrence, and the approximate time of the occurrence relative to the time of his making the report. (Albright 1970: 1)

The author also adds that this grammatical information was indicated in the form of a discontinuous predicate morpheme. This initial description resembles the Sanuma evidential system described by Borgman (1990), as well as the evidentials in Xaumatateri mentioned by Ramirez (1994) and the evidentials in Yanomama described by Ferreira (2017b).

Although Albright (1970) does not present an exhaustive list of examples, it is possible to observe the morphemes that she indicates as being DEGREE OF KNOWLEDGE from her glossed examples. Example (4) shows the morpheme *pè-* labeled as UNSPECIFIED; examples (5) and (6) show variations of WITNESSED.

² Interpreted gloss from the data in Gómez (1990: 93).

- (4) *Kup= pè= xe =yo =le*
 3DL= UNSP= hit =REC =PRS
 ‘The two are hitting each other.’ (Adapted from Albright: 1970: 12)
- (5) *Nilo tan- hoke -yoši*
 Neill WIT- travel -RES:COMPL
 ‘Neill has gone on a journey.’ (Adapted from Albright, 1970, p. 5)
- (6) *Sĩa =ho =n iro ta- se*
 younger.brother 2SG:POSS =ERG monkey WIT- kill
-la -erei sekawe =n
-?? -COMPL arrow =INSTR
 ‘Your younger brother killed a howler mokey with an arrow.’ (Adapted from Albright 1970: 5)

Table 4 presents the evidentials Albright (1970) found. According to these data, there is a subdivision within the WITNESS category that is related to the idea of being involved in the event. The description of the HEARSAY morphemes also seems to indicate that it is important for the speaker to know how the source of the information obtained the information – whether this person is a witness or a participant – as well as the location of that third person at the time of retelling the event. In addition, Albright (1970) shows two other markers, the first labeled as DEDUCED – related to the existence of evidence – and the second labeled as UNSPECIFIED, which does not provide information.

Table 4. Evidential system in Ninam (Albright: 1970)

Evidential	Form	Description
PARTICIPATED or WITNESSED	ta-	Indicates that the speaker either participated in or witnessed the event.
WITNESSED or VERIFIED	tan-	Indicates that the speaker either witnessed or verified the event.
	tak-	Indicates that the speaker either witnessed the event or received the information from a witness or participant who is not present.
HEARSAY	ha-	Indicates that the speaker did not witness or participate in the event; however it does not specify the source of the information or if the source was present at the time of the report.
	han-	Indicates that the speaker received the information from a participant or witness who is present at the time of the report. Also, the speaker is reporting a few minutes after receiving the information.
	hak-	Indicates that the speaker got the information from a participant who is not present at the time of the report.
DEDUCED	(a)man-	Indicates that the speaker is at the location of the evidence of an event.
UNSPECIFIED	(a)pe-	Does not give any information about the source of the information nor the location of the source.

Resuming the initial proposal, Albright (1970) states that the *degree of knowledge* is part of a discontinuous morpheme. This morpheme has the *degree of knowledge* on the left side of the verb and, on the other side, the part that refers to the notion of tense, aspect, and location. Table 5 summarizes Albright's description.

Table 5. Evidential system in Ninam of Alto Mucajaí (Albright 1970: 14)

Prefixal element (speaker's kind of knowledge or degree of participation)	Suffixal element (time, location of event or source of information)											
	Time	In progress				Completed today		Completed another day		Completed, unspecified		
	Location	Present	Near	Distant	Unspecified	Absent	Unspecified	Absent	Unspecified	Present	Absent	Unspecified
Participated or witnessed	ta-						-i		-(e)lei			
Witnessed or verified	tan- tak-		-thai			-shi		-eleshi	-shii			
Deduced from evidence (a)man-										-he		
Hearsay knowledge	han- hak- ha-	-i -(po)le	-thai	-lai					-shii			
Unspecified	(a)pè- ∅				-(po)le -i -wei -i -wei				-n- thalei			-he -m

3.2 Evidentials in Ninam, fifty years later

Data collected between 2021 and 2022 suggest that Ninam reduced its evidential system from a five-term system – presented in Table 5 – to a three-term system composed of VISUAL, HEARSAY, and UNSPECIFIED. Unlike the other Yanomami evidentiality systems that had been documented, this is the only language where the unmarked position for the evidentiality morpheme is a preverbal position.

In the same way as in Albright (1970), different morphemes are observed in the first preverbal slot in examples (7), (8), and (9), on the left side of the stems *ku* COP and *walo* 'arrive'. This is the same slot she identified as *degree of knowledge*, now labeled as EVIDENTIALITY. Example

(7) shows the proclitic *ta=* labeled as VISUAL, placed on the left side of *ku* COP. In this case, the speaker states that he saw the event.

- (7) *Yāno* =hèm *okolo* **ta=** *ku* =o =lei
 house =at dog **VIS=** COP =?? =REM.PST
 ‘The dog was at the house’ (the speaker saw that the dog was at the house).

The morphemes *apè=* UNSPECIFIED and *ha=* HEARSAY occur in the same position as *ta=* VISUAL, which is before the verb stem. The morpheme *ha=* HEAR in example (7) indicates that the source of information is a third person, while *apè=* UNSP in example (8) indicates that the speaker did not state the source of information or that he deduced the information through extralinguistic evidence.

- (8) *Okolo* **ha=** *walo* =ke =lei
 dog **HEAR=** arrive =ASP =REM.PST
 ‘The dog arrived.’ (a third person reported that the dog arrived).

- (9) *Okolo* **apè=** *walo* =ki =he
 dog **UNSP=** arrive =ASP =REC.PST I
 ‘The dog arrived.’ (the speaker assumes that the dog is at the house because of extralinguistic evidence).

Unlike Albright (1970), this article does not consider the evidentiality morpheme as part of a discontinuous morpheme. Although there could be a semantic relation between the use of evidentials and verb tense/aspect, the data do not indicate that they form a discontinuous morpheme because evidentials are not used exclusively with certain verb tenses, as indicated by Albright (1970), see Table 5.

3.3 Visual

The VISUAL label, which refers to information obtained through seeing, can extend to direct observation, participation, control, observable facts, and certainty (Aikhenvald 2003: 13). This could underpin Albright’s proposal described in Table 5 regarding the labels PARTICIPATED, WITNESSED, and VERIFIED. The visual marker was found in a narrative text told in the first person singular. Example (10) shows the visual marker.

- (10) *Inaha* *ku* *yalo* *Teus* *e=* *thã* =elihè
 thus COP because God 3SG.POSS= word =LOC

ya= *kěa* =wei *sũuthai* **ta=** *ku* =o
 1SG= work =INF a.little.bit **VIS=** COP =MID.VOI

 =lei
 =REM.PST
 ‘So I have worked a little bit on the Word of God.’

It is observed that the form for the VISUAL evidential resembles the verb *taa* ‘see’, c.f. example (11). This suggests that the evidential *ta=* VIS could be a grammaticalized form of the verb, which is consistent with Aikhenvald (2003: 20), who mentions that “grammaticalization of

evidentiality strategies often results in the creation of evidentiality systems.” Consequently, I consider VISUAL to be a more appropriate label rather than WITNESSED, as found in Albright (1970) and in the other Yanomami languages.

- (11) *Yutuhè* *professora* *Xakalina* *ya=* ***taa*** *=le* *=wei*
 long.time.ago teacher.FEM Jacqueline 1SG= **see** =RES =HAB
 ‘I know Jacqueline from a long time ago’

3.4 Hearsay

The HEARSAY label refers to knowledge acquired through someone else. According to Aikhenvald (2003), the way in which evidentials are chosen can be influenced by cultural stereotypes and attitudes toward knowledge. It is observed that the HEARSAY evidential is used in mythology, which are stories obtained through someone else, as shown in examples (12) and (13).

- (12) *Pata* *=pèk* *=un* *wake* *hipo* ***=ha*** *=lã* *=elahei*
 big =PL.ANIM =ERG fire own =HEAR =NEG =REM.PST:3PL
 ‘The elders (lit. the big ones) had no fire.’

- (13) *Ninam* *=un* *yalimi* *huxmili* ***ha=*** *taa* *=elei*
 person =ERG spider.monkey dead **HEAR=** see =REM.PST
 ‘A person saw the dead spider monkey.’

3.5 Unspecified

As mentioned in §2, Ramirez (1994) and Borgman (1990) described evidentials referring to inference and supposition, respectively. These labels, in a way, could fall into the idea of *uncertainty*. In the same way, I consider that Ninam expresses uncertainty, non-personal knowledge, or at least an unspecified source.

As shown in the gloss of example (9), *okolo apè walo kihe* ‘the dog arrived’, the labels DEDUCED or INFERRED seem to fit in some cases because the speaker could deduce the information through extralinguistic information, e.g., the speaker saw the dog’s footsteps. Although he did not see the dog, the extralinguistic information allows him to deduce that the dog is there. However, the speaker would always need evidence to draw conclusions. As observed in examples (14) and (15) below, the data used for this paper do not always meet that condition. These are isolated sentences collected through elicitation.

- (14) *Okolo apè=* *lele* *=a* *=po* *=le*
 dog UNSP= run =?? =CONS =PRS
 ‘The dog keeps running.’

- (15) *Kahowa apè=* *mãlixì* *=le*
 2sg UNSP= sleep =PRS
 ‘You are sleeping’

The UNSPECIFIED evidential was also found in two texts where the speaker, a man, describes some activities carried out only by the women in the village. As this evidential could express nonpersonal knowledge, it makes sense, in this case, for the man to use it, c.f. examples (16) and (17).

(16) *Haklak* =uk *apè=* *tha* =wei
 edible.yucca =CLF:liquid UNSP= do =HAB
 ‘(She) makes the cassava drink.’

(17) *Nax* =kok *apè=* *hōxi* =ma =wei *poaka* =un
 wild.yucca =CLF:root UNSP= peel =CAUS =HAB machete =INSTR
 ‘(She) peels the cassava with a machete.’

In general terms, it seems that this evidential is related to the attitude towards knowledge; the speaker may have no reliable sources, such as first-hand knowledge or someone reporting to him, so he uses this evidential. To some extent, the morpheme *apè=* holds the meaning that the morpheme *(a)man=* expressed in Albright’s analysis. This would also explain why there is no evidence of *(a)man=* DEDUCED in the newer data.

4. Evidentials and their correlation with other grammatical categories

It was observed in the Ninam data that evidentials and their behavior is correlated with other grammatical categories. In this section, I will describe the behavior of evidentials in relation to other grammatical categories that are components of the verbal word in Ninam.

4.1 Evidentials and past readings

4.1.1 Visual and hearsay

Aikhenvald (2003: 15) states that “[the] choice of evidential may depend on the choice within a tense-aspect system. Most frequently, evidentiality distinctions are found in past tenses.” Following Albright (1970), it was verified that the VISUAL evidential occurs in sentences with past tense reading =*lei* ~ =*lei* REMOTE PAST, c.f. example (10). Moreover, it was noted that the HEARSAY evidential also occurs with the past tense, as also shown in (18). On the other hand, the UNSPECIFIED evidential was not found in the data with the remote past =*lei* ~ =*lei*.

(18) *Paulu* =n *māli* *ha=* *taa* =*lei*
 Paul =ERG dream HEAR= see =REM.PST

Māli *taa* =*le* =*m* *keteen,* *Masetona* *ilihi*
 dream see =PRS =REC.PST2 so, Macedonia region

 =*hèm* *yamak* *ta=* *hu* *xemo* =*lei*.
 =to 1PL.INCL VIS= go =want =REM.PST
 ‘Paul saw a vision. So, (he) had seen the vision, we endeavored to go to Macedonia.’

4.1.2 Unspecified

Although Albright's analysis suggests the COMPLETED aspect as the label for the morpheme =*he*, the data suggest that this should be considered a past tense rather than a completed aspect marker, in the same way as Ramirez (1994, p. 498) and Borgman (1990, p. 169) labeled the morpheme =*he* and *kuhe* RECENT PAST in Xamatauteri and Sanuma, respectively.³ In this sense, it can be said that the evidential *apè=* occurs when the past time frame is indicated through the morpheme =*he* RECENT PAST1, c.f. example (19).

- (19) *Ipa* *thuwe* =*n* *hakla* =*uk* *apè=* *tha*
 1SG.POSS woman =ERG edible.yucca =CLF:liquid UNSP= do

 =*li* =*he*.
 =RES =REC.PST1
 'My wife made the cassava drink.'

4.1.3 Zero marking

One of the generalizations proposed by Anderson (1986, p. 277) is that "when the speaker (first person) was a knowing participant in some event (voluntary agent; conscious experiencer), the knowledge of that event is normally direct, and evidentials are then often omitted." This seems to be the case in Ninam for the sentences that have the past readings marked with =*ma*, since in the texts told in the first person, the speaker did not use any kind of evidentials in contrast to other texts, c.f. examples (20) and (21).

- (20) *Ũhu =thehe* *ai* *missionário* =*pèk* =*un* *yeh=* *thělema*
 DEM =when other missionary =PL =ERG 1DL= help

 =*ma* =*he*
 =REC.PST2 =3PL
 'In that time, other missionaries took care of us (dual)'
- (21) *Xosimaa* =*n* *yehek* *thělema* =*ma*
 Josimar =ERG 1DL help =REC.PST2
 'Josimar helped us.'

4.2 Evidentials and present readings

For present tense readings made with =*le*, the evidential *apè=* UNSPECIFIED is the only one that occurs, as shown in examples (22) and (23). Note that example (22) shows the evidential marker in a postverbal position, which will be explained in §4.4.

³ According to Aikhenvald and Dixon (1999) Yanomami languages share 95% of the grammatical morphemes. Although Ramirez (1994) labeled this morpheme as a RECENT PAST in other languages of the same family, the labels for tense and aspect in Ninam are still under study.

(22) *Liplosi tũlu ya= tapo =pè =haiki =le hoithehe*
 book written 1SG= know =UNSP =certainly =PRS now
 ‘Now I certainly know the written word.’

(23) *Inaha ku =yalo hiyehè gravação =elihè ya= pè=*
 thus COP =CNJ.EXPLV here recording =LOC 1SG= UNSP=

ku =le
 COP =PRS

‘That’s why I’m here at the recording.’

4.3 Evidentials and future readings

According to the data, Ninam does not distinguish evidentials in the future tense. Furthermore, the data collected in the future tense did not present any morpheme in the slot corresponding to the evidentials, c.f. examples (24) and (25). This makes sense in relation to the future tense since there is no source of information for something that has not occurred. Also, it may indicate that the UNSPECIFIED evidential does not have an epistemic sense of ‘probability’, different from Sanuma, which presents a SUPPOSITION evidential that is used in sentences in the future tense (Borgman1990: 172).

(24) *Haximi.watu =wei pata~pata ku =o =ithe*
 rest =NMLZ big~AUG have =MID.VOI =FUT
 ‘(I) will have a huge rest.’

(25) *Yeh= pèk= miyawè =ma =ithe*
 1DL= 3PL= smart =CAUS =FUT
 ‘We (dual) will make them smart.’

4.4 Evidentials and Adverbs

According to the examples shown in §3, the evidentials in Ninam occur on the left side of the verb stem. However, examples (26) and (27) show that the right side of the verb stem is another possible position for evidentials. Example (26) shows =apè UNSP after the copula, and example (27) shows =ha HEAR after the verb *xe* ‘hit’.

(26) *Mi ãxko =wei ki =apè =lã =i.*
 NEG drink =NMLZ COP =UNSP =NEG =IMM
 ‘No, it’s not just drinking.’ (unspecified)

(27) *Xe =ha =kõ =lei*
 hit =HEAR =again =REM.PST
 ‘(it) hit (it) again.’ (hearsay)

To date, it has only been determined that the evidentiality marker can change its place when an adverb, which occurs within the verb complex, appears after the verb stem. Table 6 presents a

tentative position class diagram for the elements on the left side of the verb, including the usual position of the evidentiality markers. Table 7 shows a tentative position class diagram for the elements on the right side of the verb stem, including the alternative position for the evidential markers.

Table 6. Position Class Diagram for the preverbal elements in Ninam of Alto Mucajaí

SUBJ/ OBJ	DIF. PART	COM	EVID	(ADV 3)	Stem
ya= 1 SG wa= 2 SG yeh= 1 DL pèk= 3 PL	CLF= pèk= PL Nouns Adjectives	kāi= 'together'	apè= UNSP ha= HEAR ta= VIS	kō= 'again'	

Table 7. Position Class Diagram for the postverbal elements in Ninam of Alto Mucajaí (Part I)

Stem ??	VALENCY CHANGE			ADV 2	(EVID)	ADV1	ASP	DIR/LOC	TENSE/ COM
=a	=ma CAUS	=mo REFL	=yo REC	=kō 'again'	=apè UNSP =ha HEAR =ta VIS	=kō 'again' =heli 'back' =lā NEG =heti 'too' =haiki 'certainly'	=layo ~ yo RES =li~le RES =ki~ke =po CONS =o MID.VOI =a ??	=heli AND =ima VEN	=lei PST1 =elahei PST1:3PL =he PST2 =ma PST3 =le PRS =ithe FUT =wei HAB =wehei HAB:PL =xo COM

5. Evidentials at the clause level

At the clause level, specifically in subordinate clauses, it is observed that the verbal complex in Ninam hosts a limited amount of grammatical information. It is also observed that only the main clause can host evidentiality markers, which corresponds to Aikhenvald (2003, p. 17), who states that “a fair number of languages do not have any evidentials in subordinate clauses.” As observed in example (28), the verb *tu* ‘cook’ in the subordinated clause, marked with the enclitic =*n* ‘after’, does not host any evidential, while the verb *tha* ‘do’ in the main sentence, placed at the end, hosts the UNSPECIFIED evidential.

(28) *Kok= tu =ke =n waiha kama =n*
 CLF:root= cook =?? =after after.waiting 3SG =ERG

uk= apè= tha =wei
 CLF:liquid= UNSP= do =HAB
 ‘After cooking, after waiting, she makes the drink.’ (unspecified)

As seen in example (28), subordinated clauses ending in *=n* ‘after’ can host a morpheme that has been labeled as SEQUENTIAL⁴ and that is homophonous to the evidential *ha=* HEAR. This hypothesis is based on the fact that the other evidentials, *apè=* UNSP and *ta=* VIS, were not found in other subordinate clauses, c.f example (29). Therefore, it is assumed that we are dealing with another morpheme that shares the same form as the evidential.

(29)	Ha=	<i>yatiki</i>	<i>=la</i>	<i>=mo</i>	<i>=yo</i>	=n	<i>kahiki</i>	ha=
	SEQ=	shake	=CAUS	=REFL	=RES	=after	mouth	HEAR=
		<i>lelehe</i>	<i>=o</i>	<i>=elei</i>				
		open	=MID.VOI	=REM.PST				

‘After causing shaking, the mouth opened.’

6. Conclusions

Amazonian languages have unique characteristics. The languages belonging to the Yanomami family, more specifically Ninam of Alto Mucajaí, are no exception. The evidential system addressed in this paper demonstrates that Ninam speakers, as well as other groups in the Amazon region, have a particular attitude toward information related to the fact that all events have an explanation. In addition to demonstrating the source of information, the use of evidential markers in Ninam of Alto Mucajaí seems to be a way to express the involvement of the speaker in the event or information that is being transmitted.

From this description, it can be summarized that (a) the Ninam of Alto Mucajaí language has a three-term system –VISUAL, HEARSAY, and UNSPECIFIED, (b) the VISUAL evidential is a grammaticalized form of the verb *taa* ‘see’, (c) the occurrence of an evidential is connected to the use of tense markers, but they do not form discontinuous morphemes, (d) sentences with the first person can omit evidentials, and (e) evidentiality markers only occur in the main clause.

In relation to the variations of the VISUAL and HEARSAY evidentials mentioned by Albright (1970), data collected between 2021 and 2022 did not show such markers, so further study is needed to verify if they continue to be used. As mentioned in §3.1, these variations seem to express information on involvement and localization, the latter is not surprising since Sanuma and Yanomama also display information about location in their markers. Finally, a more detailed study of the behavior of evidentials and adverbs is needed to determine whether the change of position has a phonological explanation, whether the position of these categories is related to verb types, or whether these categories and potentially others are able to switch positions in relation to the verb stem.

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⁴ This is a tentative label.

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Abbreviations

??	Category under study	LOC	Locative
ADV	Adverb	NEG	Negation
ASP	Aspect	NMLZ	Nominalizer
AUG	Augmentative	NON.WIT	Non Witnessed
CAUS	Causative	OBJ	Object
CLF	Noun classifier	MID.VOI	Middle voice
CONS	Conservative	PL	Plural
COM	Comitative	POSS	Possessive
COMPL	Completive	PRS	Present tense
COP	Copula	REM.PST	Remote past
DEM	Demonstrative	REC.PST1	Recent Past (still under study)
DIF.PART	Different participant	REC.PST2	Recent Past (still under study)
DIR	Directional	REC	Reciproc
DL	Dual	REFL	Reflexive
ERG	Ergative case	RES	Resultative
EVID	Evidentials	SG	Singular
FEM	Feminine	SUBJ	Subject
FUT	Future tense	UNSP	Unspecified source
HAB	Habitual	VERT	Vertical
HEAR	Hearsay evidential	VIS	Visual evidential
IMM	Immediate	WIT	Witnessed
INCL	Inclusive	1	First person
INF	Infinitive	2	Second person
INSTR	Instrumental case	3	Third person

CRedit – Contributor Roles Taxonomy

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