Biloxi Realis and Irrealis Particles

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1.   Introduction

Realis and irrealis expressions are modal or pragmatic in nature. Realis and irrealis particles reflect "the grammaticization of speakers' (subjective) attitudes and opinions" (Bybee et al. 1994: 176). They reflect a speaker's attitude or level of certainty about the likelihood of a particular, usually past or future, action or occurrence. Among Indo-European languages, heavy focus is placed on grammar and syntax. However, in Siouan and other Native American languages, greater speaker-centered modal usage requires more focus on pragmatics and discourse.

In this paper, I compare the use of two Biloxi (ISO 639-3 bll) particles and explore what their use tells us about Biloxi discourse and pragmatics. I examine various uses of these particles as they appear in Biloxi narratives. Biloxi is a dormant Siouan language, a member of the Ohio Valley branch of the Siouan language family.

2.   Realis and irrealis

The term "irrealis" is a modal distinction that refers to speech acts that are counterfactual, such as in conditional, hortative, and imperative utterances, or in utterances expressing obligation or future occurrences. That is, irrealis generally includes events still within the realm of thought or imagination, while realis normally includes events "actualized, actually occurring or having occurred" (Mithun 1995: 375). In some languages, irrealis can include past events as well as interrogatives and negatives.

The realis-irrealis modal distinction is grammatically indicated in different ways, including by the use of particles, clausal clitics, and verbal inflection. Due to such broad variation, "the utility of the labels 'Irrealis' and 'Realis' for cross-linguistic comparison is open to question" (Mithun 1995: 368). In fact, the conceptual distinction between the use of realis and irrealis marking is often a matter of pragmatics and discourse, and speakers of languages incorporating the realis versus irrealis distinction may do so "for expressive purposes" (ibid.: 385) or to display their own attitude or expectations about the possibility or probability of a particular occurrence.

The realis-irrealis distinction is reported in many languages worldwide, including in a number of Native American languages. The classification of certain speech acts to be in the realm of "irrealis" is crosslinguistically highly variable (Mithun 1995), and what is considered to be realis in one language may be considered irrealis in another (Bybee 1998: 267).

The typical scope of irrealis marking is over a clause. The two Biloxi particles are *dąde* and *hi*.

3.   The future particle *dąde*

Dorsey and Swanton (1912) translate *dąde* as a future particle meaning "will" or "shall." Einaudi analyzes it as a type of "potential mode" marker (1974: 81), as she does *hi*. They are

both correct to some degree, but neither of them explores the difference in usage between the two particles.

The particle *dǫde* is likely a contraction of *dê* 'go' (with ablaut to *da*, which happens before positional auxiliaries) + *ǫde* 'move,' a verb + positional auxiliary construction indicating continuative or progressive aspect, which then became grammaticized to a future marker.

Examples (1)-(3) show the use of *dǫde* to denote a possible future event:

<div style="margin-left: 2em;">

(1)   *Witedi ko tha dǫde.*
tomorrow ?   die   FUT
'He will die tomorrow.'
(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 124, cited in Einaudi 1974: 81)

(2)   *Ąk–a dǫde na*
1-say FUT   DECL.m
'I will say it.'
(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 47, cited in Einaudi 1974: 81)

(3)   *N–yi–nǫpa ą–da dǫde.*
1.2.two   1-go FUT
'I will go with you.'
(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 137)

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Example (4) demonstrates the use of *dǫde* in a question:

<div style="margin-left: 2em;">

(4)   *Ą–da dǫde i–yuhi?*
1-go FUT 2-think
'Did you think that I was going?'
(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 144)

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Example (5) shows the use of *dǫde* to mean 'at the point of' or 'about to':

<div style="margin-left: 2em;">

(5)   *Tohana ąk–hu dǫde.*
yesterday 1-come FUT
'I was about to come yesterday.'
(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 180)

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Examples (6)-(7) below show *dǫde* used in reply to a question, presumably: "What is that (animal)?" Although it appears that a future particle is being used in response, I suspect that, in fact, *dǫde* here is used with its original ungrammaticized progressive meaning of 'go (along) moving,' since animals are often referred to in the Biloxi texts as being in motion.

<div style="margin-left: 2em;">

(6)   *Ktu dǫde.*
ktu da–ǫde
cat go-MOVE
'That is a cat.'
(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 160)

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(7)   *Cǫki dą̈de.*

        cǫki   da–ą̈de
        dog   go-MOVE
        'That is a dog.'
        (Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 160)

Thus, except when retaining its ungrammaticized progressive meaning, *dą̈de* appears to be a grammaticized potential mode marker expressing a speaker's stance of maximum certainty about a future event.

       We can now turn to the particle *hi*. Unlike *dą̈de*, this particle expresses a speaker's stance of minimum certainty about a potential occurrence.

3.   The irrealis particle *hi*

       Dorsey and Swanton (1912) were rather vague about the true nature and use of *hi*. Einaudi describes *hi* as a "hortatory" marker (1974: 80) and "potential mode" marker (ibid.: 92), as she does *dą̈de*. I agree with her analysis of *hi* as a marker of potential mode, although she did not clearly distinguish between the uses of the two markers *dą̈de* and *hi*.

       Examples (8)-(9) show the use of *hi* to express a future idea:

(8)   *i–duti hi   na*
        2-eat   IRR   DECL.m
        'You shall eat it.'
        (Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 68, cited in Einaudi 1974: 81)

(9)   *i–dǫx–tu   hi   ni*
        2-see-PL   IRR   DECL.f
        'They shall see you.'
        (Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 88, cited in Einaudi 1974: 81)

We can compare examples (8)-(9) with examples (1)-(3) in which the speaker conveys an attitude of more certainty, or, in the case of (2) and (3), greater intentionality, about the future occurrence with the use of *dą̈de* than is implied in (8) and (9) with *hi*.

       Examples (10)-(11) demonstrate the use of *hi* with questions:

(10)   *Cidike a–yaǫ hi   i–nąki   wo?*
        why   2-sing IRR 2-sit   INTER.m
        'Why do you sit there singing?'
        (Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 146, cited in Einaudi 1974: 80)

(11)   *Kawa   ąk–ǫǫ ta   hi   wo?*
        something 1-do   want IRR INTER.m
        'What will (we) wish to do?'

(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 113, cited in Einaudi 1974: 81)

We can compare examples (10)-(11) with example (4) in which the questioner appears to convey an attitude of more certainty about the listener's past thought process through the use of *dạde*. Examples (12)-(13) reveal the use of *hi* in statements involving thinking:

(12) *Kọni naxê nạki hi yuhi.*
mother listen sit IRR think
'He thought his mother was sitting (and) listening.'
(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 28)

(13) *Ani ạ-dọ(hi)-ni ạk-ạda hi yihi.[1]*
water 1-see-NEG 1-PROG IRR think
'He thought I should not see the water.'
(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 33, cited in Einaudi 1974: 81)

Compare (14) below without *hi* or any other particle; the absence of a particle indicates that the speaker strongly believes that the action has been completed:

(14) *Ạ-duwê yuhi.*
1-untie think
'He thought that I untied it.'
(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 145)

Hi, on the other hand, appears to mark an action that the speaker believes has not yet become or never became reality:

(15) *Duwa hi ax.ki.yê-di.*
untie IRR 1.DAT.say-ASSERT
'I told him to untie it.'
(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 145)

Similarly, in examples (16)-(17), *hi* marks the speaker's uncertainty about whether the action would be or had been accomplished:

(16) *u.to(ho) hi ki-yê-di*
LOC.lie IRR DAT-say-ASSERT
'They told him to lie in it.'
(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 113, cited in Einaudi 1974: 81)

(17) *u.toho dọhi hi pạhị-kạ kiya ki-yê*
LOC.lie see IRR sack-LOC again DAT-say
'He told him to lie in it to see how it is (again).'

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[1] The two versions of Biloxi "think," *yihi* and *yuhi*, exemplify that the Biloxi vowels *i* and *u* often appear interchangeable. Whether this is indicative of dialect difference or something else remains unknown.

(Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 27)

Both *hi* and *dǫde* can express future possibility, but there appears to be a pragmatic distinction between them: a distinction reflecting a speaker's emotional state or attitude at the time of speaking. Similarly, in the unrelated Central Pomo (Hokan) language, two particles can be used to express a future idea, *da* and *hla*:

(18) *Ma-báya čá-·l yó-w=da   ʔe   mu·l maʔá chu-w=ʔkʰe.*
     POSS-man house=to go-PFV=DIFF.SIM.REALIS COP that food eat-PFV=FUT
     'When her husband gets home, she'll eat.'
     (Mithun 1995: 379)

According to the Central Pomo consultant, the use of realis *da* indicates that the action will *definitely* be completed, whereas the irrealis counterpart *hla* would indicate some uncertainty. I propose that this difference between Pomo *da* and *hla* is equivalent to the difference between Biloxi *dǫde* and *hi*.

I agree with Payne in considering realis-irrealis to fall along a continuum (1997: 244). Viewing realis-irrealis as a gradual continuum rather than a duality, it appears that *dǫde* is the "more realis" particle and indicates more certainty on the part of the speaker, while *hi* is the "more irrealis" form that demonstrates a higher level of doubt or uncertainty about the occurrence.

The distinction between *dǫde* and *hi* may also sometimes be related to Biloxi male versus female speech patterns, respectively:

(19) *Yac ǫǫ-tu   ąda dǫde.*
     name make-PL move FUT
     'They call him so, and he will be so.' (male speaking)
     (Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 155)

(20) *Yac ǫǫ-tu   ąda hi ni.*
     name make-PL move FUT DECL.f
     'They call him so, and he will be so.' (female speaking)
     (Dorsey and Swanton 1912: 155)

Since the man uses *dǫde* while the woman uses *hi* for essentially the same utterance, this may show "native speaker metapragmatic judgments" (Trechter 1995: 5) possibly related to gendered speech patterns, or it may be related to the level of authority the speaker, regardless of gender, wishes to convey.

Overall, *hi* appears to be used where more uncertainty is involved, such as in questions and expressions of thinking or wishing. It is unclear, however, whether the term "irrealis" should be used to refer to all of the situations in which *hi* is used. The use of "broad terms such as 'irrealis' unfortunately distracts the analyst from a more in-depth semantic analysis" (Bybee 1998: 266). The conceptual distinction between realis and irrealis marking is quite subjective and is often a matter of pragmatics and discourse that varies across languages, defying clear and rigid boundaries (Payne 1997).

4. Summary and conclusion

The two Biloxi irrealis particles *dąde* and *hi* are both used as future markers, one more realis (*dąde*) and one less realis (*hi*). More realis *dąde* implies more certainty while less realis *hi* implies less certainty. The choice is speaker-centered, or pragmatic, based on the speaker's attitude and emotional state at the time of speaking. The choice may also reflect the gender of a speaker and his or her conformity to a cultural gender speech pattern, although more evidence is required to ascertain this. The particle *dąde* appears to be a grammaticized form of a an original progressive construction, which could still occur in a present tense existential manner, as shown in examples (6)-(7).

Realis and irrealis markers are similar to markers of evidentiality, which reflect the personal evaluation of the speaker about the perceived truth of a particular piece of information. Evidentiality is another aspect of Siouan languages that needs more study. Evidentiality marking clearly appears, however, through the use of different particles in Biloxi.

In languages like Biloxi that are more heavily modal-centered, a speaker *must* choose a particle that pragmatically best suits his or her feelings about the probability of a future event. In languages like English, this distinction is not syntactically required, although it can be expressed periphrastically using modal or separate verbs. But the fact that languages like Biloxi *require* the speaker to choose a particle falling along different parts of the realis-irrealis continuum reflects a greater degree of speaker-centered control over how much of their own feelings or attitude about a situation or occurrence they would like to convey to their listener.

Abbreviations

•	vowel length	FUT	future
-	morpheme boundary	INTER	interrogative
1	1st person	IRR	irrealis
2	2nd person	m	masculine
3	3rd person	NEG	negative
DAT	dative	PFV	perfective
DECL	declarative	PL	plural
DIFF	different	PROG	progressive
EVID	evidential	SIM	simultaneous
f	feminine		

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