

Rhetorical Question from the Viewpoint of Evidentiality (On the Material of the Georgian Language)

Ramaz Kurdadze* and Ketevan Margiani*

*Faculty of Humanities, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia

(Presented by Academy Member Mzekala Shanidze)

ABSTRACT. In the present paper a rhetorical question is analyzed from the viewpoint of evidentiality. The research is based on Georgian language material. It is widely known that a rhetorical question contains the answer in itself. It is a type of poetic figure proving something in the form of a question. Evidentiality is, above all, a textual category, expressing the attitude of the speaker to the information provided in the text. In other words, this category implies the subjective attitude of the speaker to the context i.e. this category indicates whether the information is directly perceived by the informer or is obtained from some other (“secondary”) source. There are three widespread sources of information, regarding which the speaker informs or hints to the hearer. These sources are: perception of the event, verbality and inference. Inference points to the information which is based on logical conclusion drawn as a result of trace, or background knowledge, experience or real-life facts. The authors of the paper argue that certain types of rhetorical questions should be considered evidential, based on the inferential source. Whether or not a rhetorical question is evidential, more or less depends on the context. However, due to the specifics of such sentences, it can be concluded that their chief semantic peculiarity is inferential evidentiality. © 2019 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: evidentiality, perception, verbality, inference, rhetorical question

It is widely known that an interrogative sentence requires an answer. However, there is a certain type of an interrogative sentence “which contains the answer in itself. Such question is called “Rhetorical”. For instance: ვინ დათვალოს ზღვაში ქვიშა და ან ცაზე ვარსკვლავები? *Vin datvalos zvaši kviša da an caze varskvlavebi?* “Who can count sand in the sea or stars in the sky?” ვინ შეამკოს ღირსეულად ქართველ გმირთა მხარ-მკლავები? *vin šeamkos yirseulad*

kartvel gmirta mxar-mklavebi? “Who can give due praise to the mighty arms of Georgian soldiers?” (Tsereteli); ჩემო კალამო, ჩემო კარგო, რად გვინდა ტაში? *čemo kalamo, čemo kargo, rad gvinda taši?* “My pen, my dear, do we need any applause?” (Chavchavadze); ბულბულის სტვენით ნადირი ვის მოუგერებიაო? *bulbulis svenit nadiri vis mougeriebiao?* “Who can scare a beast by whistling like a nightingale?” (Tsereteli, 8. 27)” [1:36-37].

A rhetorical question is a type of poetic figure proving something by means of a question [1:37].

Apart from fiction, rhetorical questions are found in ordinary written and oral speech. They have great stylistic value: they add vitality to the speech, drawing the reader's or hearer's attention to a certain fact or event [1:37]. A rhetorical question differs from other types of questions in that it is peculiar to monologues, does not require an answer, makes the utterance more expressive and enhances the attention of the reader/hearer [2:54].

A rhetorical question also differs from other questions by intonation: it is uttered emotionally and with greater pathos. Therefore, at the end of such question we usually find a question mark followed by an exclamation mark.

In order to underline the difference in intonation, N. Basilaia quotes the following examples:

ვინ მოიცლის ამ საქმისთვის? *vin moiclis am sakmistvis?* "Who will have time to do this job?" In this case the speaker wants to know concretely who will have time to do the job. However, the same question may be used rhetorically, expressing doubt and not requiring any answer:

ვინ მოიცლის ამ საქმისთვის?! *vin moiclis am sakmistvis?!* "Who will have time to do this job?!" may imply that *nobody will* [2:54].

According to its content, a rhetorical question may be of two types: affirmative and negative. A sentence which is negative in form, expresses a positive idea: განა ჩვენ არ ვიყავით ამის მოწმე? *gana čven ar viqavit amis močme?* "Didn't we witness it?" Whereas the affirmative rhetorical question expresses a negative idea: განა ყველაფერი უნდა ეთქვა? *gana qvelaperi unda etkva?..* "Should he have said all this?" In other words, rhetorical questions are regarded as emotional affirmation and emotional negation [2:53].

In some cases, the author himself/herself answers the rhetorical question. L. Kvachadze considers such question and answer to be a stylistic device serving the purpose of development of

thought [1:37]. According to N. Basilaia, in such cases narration is similar to a dialogue. However, in such cases, the answer is also given by the speaker in order to attach more expressive power to the speech that is, to make the idea more convincing: განა ეს საქმე ასე უნდა დამთავრებულიყო? – არა, ასე არ უნდა დამთავრებულიყო *gana es sakme ase unda damtavrebuloqo? – ara, ase ar unda damtavrebuloqo* "Should this affair have ended in this way? – it should not have ended in this way".

In frequent cases, the author uses rhetorical questions to address inanimate objects, nature: მთებო, მთებო! რას ელით, ვის ელით? *mtebo, mtebo! ras elit, vis elit?* "Mountains, mountains! what are you waiting for? Who are you awaiting?" [1:37]. We argue that in such cases, despite the stylistic device of personification (ascribing human features to inanimate objects), the rhetorical question is based on objective reality: the addressee is unable to answer. Thus, a question addressed to an inanimate object is always rhetorical. However, with regard to human beings, the same question may be both rhetorical and non-rhetorical.

According to the structure, rhetorical questions are:

Simple: სხვა საქართველო სად არის? *sxva sakartvelo sad aris?* "Where is there another Georgia?" [3:16];

Compound: მე რა მაქვს ახლა? რა მექნება? ან რა მეზადა? *me ra makvs axla? ra mekneba? an ra mezada?* "What do I own now? What will I own? What have I owned?" [4:139];

Complex, mostly subordinate: ამ წუთისთვის ვისა აქვს მეტი ლუკმა, რომ შენ გაძლიოს?! *am čutisovelsi visa akvs mefi lukma, rom šen gazlios?!* "Who has extra food in this world so that it can be offered to you?!" [5:243].

Georgian rhetorical questions in the form of complex subordinate sentences have been discussed by L. Kvantaliani [6:48-59].

After this brief description of rhetorical questions, we will discuss them from the viewpoint

of evidentiality. Regarding the terms: if information is a result of direct perception (or equal to direct perception), it is called primary information, and, with regard to evidentiality, it is called directly evidential or non-evidential; if information is obtained from a different source, it is called secondary, whereas, from the viewpoint of evidentiality, it is termed indirectly evidential or evidential. For directly obtained information, we use the term **Non-evidential**, whereas for the information obtained from a different source, we use the term **Evidential**.

It is well known that evidentiality is, above all, a textual category expressing the relation between the information given in the text and the informer. In other words, this category denotes the subjective attitude of the speaker to the context, i.e. this category defines whether the information is directly perceived by the speaker or it has been obtained from some other source (“secondary”) [7].

There are three most usual sources of information, regarding which the speaker informs the hearer:

- Perception of the event
- Verbality
- Inference

In the list above-mentioned, inference means information based on logical conclusion derived from trace, background knowledge, experience and of real life events [8].

We argue that certain rhetorical questions are evidential and based on inference.

As mentioned above, a rhetorical question is a type of poetic figure proving something by means of a question. Taking this definition into account, we can easily perceive the inferential nature of rhetorical questions, because one can prove something only basing on information derived from logical conclusions. In most cases, such information is based on facts known to the speaker. That is why a rhetorical question does not require any answer, i.e. the speaker proves something inferred by him/her (or known to him/her) using the

form of a question. Since a rhetorical question may be based on the inferential source, it can be considered as evidential.

The fact that a rhetorical question does not require an answer is not sufficient for considering such sentence as evidential, because there are other types of questions not requiring an answer, for instance, a question said in response to a question. L. Kvachadze gives the following examples: – როგორ მოშორდი? – რა გითხრა, შვილო? – *rogor mošordi? – ra gitxra, švilo?* “– How did you get away? – What can I say, my child?” (Chavchavadze., 195); ახლა – შენ რომ მარტო დარჩები? – იკითხა კესომ. – მარტო რად დავრჩები? ზოგი ჩემს გულშიაც ჩაიხედე, რამდენი ბღარტები მიზის *axla šen rom marṭo darčebi? – iḳitxa ḳesom. – marṭo rad davrčebi? zogi čems gulšiac čaixede, ramdeni byarṭebi mizis* “*What will become of you now that you remain alone? – asked Keso. – Why [do you say that] I will remain alone? I have so many little birds (children) in my heart*” (Chavchavadze, 446) [1:36]. The interrogative sentences uttered in response to questions: – რა გითხრა, შვილო? – *ra gitxra, švilo?* “*What can I say, my child?*” and – მარტო რად დავრჩები? – *marṭo rad davrčebi* “– *Why [do you say that] I will remain alone?*” Do not require answers, but these sentences do not prove anything based on the source of inference, hence, they are not rhetorical, therefore, they cannot be considered evidential.

The semantics of doubt present in some rhetorical questions serves to pertain rhetorical questions to evidential. This semantics of doubt distinguishes a rhetorical question from an ordinary interrogative sentence. Let us consider the example above-mentioned: ვინ მოიცლის ამ საქმისთვის?! *vin moiqlis am sakmistvis?!* “*Who will have time to do this job?!*” As mentioned above, if one really enquires about the person who will do the job, it is an ordinary interrogative sentence, but, if we express doubt that no one will be willing to do the job, it means that the doubt is

based on the inferential knowledge of the speaker. Therefore, the utterance is epistemic; it is based on the source of information, hence, the utterance is evidential.

A rhetorical question may be non-evidential if the question and the implied answer are based on perception. For instance, when someone tries a highly-praised new dish and does not like it, he says: ეს არის გემრიელი *es aris gemrieli?* “*You call this tasty?*” The question is rhetorical but non-evidential. Such non-evidential rhetorical questions are mostly related to unexpected direct perception and remind of the formal coincidence of evidentiality with admirative utterances. In such cases the same sentence is evidential in one context (based on verbal or inferential source) and non-evidential in another context where perception is direct and the speaker does not mention the source. For instance:

1. ამბობენ, პავლეს დიდი სახლი აუშენებია *amboben, pavles didi saxli aušenebia* “*They say Pavle has built a large house*”. Evidential, source – verbal;

2. პავლეს დიდი სახლი აუშენებია *pavles didi saxli aušenebia* “*Pavle must have built a large house*”. The speaker learnt that Pavle needed a large amount of construction materials. Therefore, he drew a logical conclusion concerning the size of the house. Evidential; source – inferential;
3. The speaker sees Pavle’s house for the first time: დიდი (რამხელა) სახლი აუშენებია! *didi (ramxela) saxli aušenebia* “*What a large house Pavle has built!*” Non-evidential, semantic category – admirative.

Thus, to a certain extent, the evidentiality of a rhetorical question depends on the context. However, taking into account the specifics of such sentences, it can be concluded that in most cases their chief semantic peculiarity is inferential evidentiality.

The paper was supported by Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia, project #217300 “The Category of Evidentiality in the Kartvelian Languages”.

ენათმეცნიერება

რიტორიკული შეკითხვა ევიდენციალობის თვალსაზრისით (ქართული ენის მასალაზე)

რ. ქურდაძე* და ქ. მარგიანი*

* ივანე ჯავახიშვილის სახ. თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი, ჰუმანიტარულ მეცნიერებათა ფაკულტეტი, თბილისი, საქართველო

(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის მ. შანიძის მიერ)

სტატიაში რიტორიკული შეკითხვა განხილულია ევიდენციალობის თვალსაზრისით ქართული ენის მასალაზე. როგორც ცნობილია, რიტორიკული შეკითხვა თვითონვე შეიცავს პასუხს. იგი პოეტური ფიგურის ერთ-ერთი სახეობაა, რომელიც შეკითხვის ფორმით შეიცავს რისამე მტკიცებას. ევიდენციალობა პირველ რიგში ტექსტის კატეგორიაა და გულისხმობს დამოკიდებულებას ამ ტექსტში გადმოცემულ ინფორმაციასა და ინფორმატორს შორის; სხვაგვარად: ეს კატეგორია გულისხმობს მთქმელის სუბიექტურ მიმართებას კონტექსტთან, ანუ ინფორმაცია ინფორმატორისთვის პირდაპირი აღქმის ნაყოფია, თუ სხვა წყაროდან (“შეორე, სხვა ხელიდან”) მიღებული. გამოყოფენ ინფორმაციის ყველაზე გავრცელებულ სამ წყაროს, რომელთა შესახებაც მთქმელი ამცნობს ან მიაჩნის მსმენელს: მოვლენის პერცეფცია, ვერბალობა, ინფერენცია. მათგან ინფერენციული წყარო გულისხმობს კვალის ან ფონური ცოდნის, გამოცდილების, რეალური ცხოვრებისეული მოვლენების მიხედვით ლოგიკურ დასკვნაზე დაფუძნებულ ინფორმაციას. სტატიაში გამოთქმულია მოსაზრება, რომლის მიხედვითაც ინფერენციულ წყაროზე დამყარებულ ევიდენციალურად უნდა ჩავთვალოთ გარკვეული სახის რიტორიკული შეკითხვები. რიტორიკული შეკითხვა ევიდენციალურია თუ არა, მეტნაკლებად მაინც კონტექსტზეა დამოკიდებული, თუმცა ამ ტიპის წინადადებათა სპეციფიკიდან გამომდინარე, შეიძლება ითქვას, რომ, ძირითადად, მისი მთავარი სემანტიკური მახასიათებელი მაინც ინფერენციული ევიდენციალობაა.

REFERENCES

1. Kvachadze L. (1988) The syntax of modern Georgian language. Tbilisi (in Georgian).
2. Basilaia N.(1983) Types of sentences based on affirmation and content/intonation i.e. modality. Tbilisi (in Georgian).
3. Kalandadze A. (2014) Poems. Tbilisi (in Georgian).
4. Tabidze T. (1960) Selected poems. Tbilisi (in Georgian).
5. Chavchavadze I. (1988) Compositions, short stories, narrative poems. Tbilisi (in Georgian).
6. Kvantaliani L. (1990) Issues of Georgian oral speech. Tbilisi (in Georgian).
7. Aikhenvald A. Y. (2004) Evidentiality. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
8. Kordi E. E. (2007) Kategoriia evidentsial'nosti vo frantsuzskom iazyke v: evidencial'nost' v iazykakh Evropy i Azii, Sankt-Peterburg (in Russian).

Received July, 2019