Introduction: Evidence from Evidentials

Rose-Marie Déchaine, Tyler Peterson, Uli Sauerland

The collection of papers in the present volume represents the convergence of two research communities who had the common goal of exploring the formal basis of evidentiality. In the fall of 2007, a research seminar focusing on the cross-linguistic typology of evidentials was held at UBC. In the spring of 2008, GLOW hosted a workshop on the semantics evidentials whose broad goal of the workshop was to understand and explain what kind of category "evidentiality" is. This volume presents a selection of some of these seminar and workshop papers.

Broadly speaking, evidentiality is the expression of the source of evidence for a proposition. Cross-linguistically, different morphological means are used to express evidentiality. For example, in English, evidentiality can be expressed by adverbial expressions (1), by modals (2), or by verbs (3).

(1)   *Evidentiality expressed by adverbs:*

    a. **Actually,** it's raining.
       CONTEXT: speaker has direct perceptual evidence that it is raining

    b. **Apparently,** it's raining.
       CONTEXT: speaker has indirect inferential evidence that it is raining (e.g. speaker observes someone coming in with a wet umbrella)

    c. **Reportedly,** it's raining.
       CONTEXT: speaker has indirect hearsay evidence that it is raining

(2)   *Evidentiality expressed by modal:*

    a. It **must** be raining.
       CONTEXT: speaker has indirect inferential evidence that it is raining (e.g. speaker observes that street is wet and infers that it has rained)

    b. It **might** be raining.
       CONTEXT: speaker has indirect inferential evidence that it is raining (e.g. speaker observes that street is wet, knows that today is when the streets are cleaned, and infers that rain is a possibility.)

(3) *Evidentiality expressed by verb:*

    a. [&]I **hear** that it's raining.

      (i.) CONTEXT: speaker has direct perceptual evidence that it is raining (e.g. speaker hears the rain hitting the roof)

      (ii.) CONTEXT: speaker has indirect hearsay evidence that it is raining (e.g. someone has told speaker that it is raining)

    b. It **seems/appears** to be raining.
      CONTEXT: speaker has evidence that it is raining (e.g. speaker has either direct or indirect evidence)

    c. Lucy **told** me that it's raining.
      CONTEXT: speaker has indirect hearsay evidence that it is raining

In other languages modals aspectual morphology (Bulgarian, Turkish, Chechen, etc.) can take on evidential meaning. In Bulgarian, the 'perfect of evidentiality' (glossed as 'PE') has an indirect evidential interpretation in addition to its aspectual one:

(4) Bulgarian (Izvorski1997)

Maria celunala Ivan
Maria kissed.PE Ivan
"Maria has kissed Ivan."   PERFECT
"Maria apparently kissed Ivan."   PERFECT OF EVIDENTIALITY (PE)

And some languages have specialized evidential morphology in the form of affixes or particles (Japanese, Quechua, Tibetan, etc.). For example, the reportative marker *-si* in Quechua indicates that the speaker heard the information expressed in the claim from someone else:

(5) Quechua (Faller 2002)

para-sha-n-si
rain-PROG-3-*si*
"It's raining."
EV: speaker was told that it is raining

Evidentials are in the cross-hairs of all developments in syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. On the one hand, the analytic tools for investigating the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties evidentials have progressed to a point where they permit a granularity of analysis that wasnât possible before. On the other hand, we expect that, as more in-depth studies of evidentials in different languages are conducted, this will lead to a refinement of the models used to analyzed evidentials.

Investigating evidentiality forces us to pay attention to how form, meaning and use integrated. This means that the following domains must be taken into account when developing a model of evidentiality:

Morphosyntax (form): How is evidentiality encoded? Are there any morphosyntactic regularities in the expression of evidentiality, either within a language or across languages? What is the significance of the absence of overt coding, i.e. can unmarked propositions have evidential force?

Semantic (meaning): What does evidentiality express? Does evidentiality reduce to a special kind of epistemic modality? Or is evidentiality a primitive in the grammar? Or is evidentiality the side-effect of the convergence of a number of different factors relating to knowledge base and perspective? Do we require a formal theory of evidentiality?

Pragmatics (use): How are evidentials used? What felicity conditions constrain their context-of-use? Which presuppositions (if any) are attached to evidentials. How are evidentials used to convey meanings at the speech act level such as mirativity and irony?

The analyses focus on different aspects of the syntax, the semantics, and the pragmatics of evidentiality. The languages analyzed include **Cree** (Déchaine), **English** (Remberger, Gilmour et al.), **German** (Schenner), **Gitksan** (Littell et al., Peterson), **Japanese** (McCready), **Lillooet** (Littell et al.), **Quechua** (McCready), **Russian** (Steriopolo), **Tagalog** (Schwager, Chuakaw & Cohen et al.), **Thompson** (Littell et al.), **Turkish** (Peterson, Stott et al.), and **Yorùbá** (Brown).

For the **syntactic** analysis of evidentials, the following questions arise:

(i.) How are evidentials integrated into clause structure?

(ii.) How do evidentials interact with scope-taking operators?

(iii.) How do evidentials interact with other syntactic positions?

The latter question is the focus of the papers in this volume. At the clause-typing level, we observe a competition between polarity-marking and evidential-marking at the right edge of the clause in Yorùbá (**Brown**). A different kind of parallelism is found in Russian, which we see that evidentials and expressives are functionally related in that they are both markers of epistemology, with expressives being merged as heads or modifiers (**Steriopolo**). Turkish reveals a different part of the puzzle: here we see that negation can be used as a diagnostic for distinguishing the aspectual versus evidential use of two nearly homophonous morphemes (**Stott et al.**).

Regarding the **semantics** of evidentiality, we can identify four major themes:

(i.) Which aspects of the meaning of evidentials are specific to evidentiality?

(ii.) Which aspects of the meaning of evidentials interact with tense/aspect/mood systems?

(iii.) Which aspects of the meaning of evidentials are related to other categories such as epistemics, evaluatives, and speech acts?

(iv.) Which aspects of the meaning of evidentials can be attributed to other independent mechanisms, e.g. modality, aspect, perspectival information?

Evidentiality requires a source of evidence (which is the basis for a knowledge state) and a witness (which is the basis for a perspectival state). These two properties arguably define all evidential markers; as such, they can be considered to be "evidential universals" (**McCready**). While much work on evidentials focuses on their occurrence in root contexts, less attention has been paid to evidentials in embedded contexts (**Schenner**). Reportative evidentials, which constitute the most familiar type of indirect evidence, differ along well-defined parameters (**Schwager**), including the strength of the report (strong vs. weak reportativity), the source of the report ("person parameter"), and the logical type of the reportative (propositional vs. illocutionary). the evidential use of want in German (**Remberger**). integrate Littell et al. paper

Regarding the **pragmatics** of evidentiality, we can identify three major themes:

  (i.) How is evidentiality used to code perspectival information?

 (ii.) How is evidentiality used at the the speech act level?

(iii.) How is evidentiality used to implicate other meanings?

Evidentials code perspectival information in the same way as evaluative predicate: both require the presence of a contextually determined judge (**McCready**). In Plains Cree, propositions with evidential force are argued to be non-assertive, in that the propositional content is not assigned a truth-value (**Déchaine**).

Evidentials can also be used in different kinds of sentences, such as questions. In St'át'imcets, Nɬeʔkepmxcín, and Gitksan, the insertion of a conjectural/inferential evidential into a question creates a non-interrogative utterance, roughly translatable using 'I wonder' (**Littell et al.**). Evidentials also have extended uses in discourse that express other kinds meanings. For example, English evidential expressions such as look like can be used to express irony (**Gilmour et al.**), and in Gitksan there is a relation in the mirative and metaphorical uses of evidentials (**Peterson**).

In addition to examining evidentials from the core linguistic domains of syntax, semantics and pragmatics, we can observe their distribution in different kinds of corpora, such as the distribution of evidentials in the description of dream sequences (**Cohen et al.**), and the statistical distribution of multiple evidential markers across different age groups (**Cheung et al.**).

Studies on evidentiality from a typological or functional perspective have been largely shaped by the seminal collection of papers in the Chafe & Nichols (1986) volume *Evidentiality: The Linguistic Coding of Epistemology*, and more recently Aikhenvald's (2004) comprehensive study of evidentials in *Evidentiality*. Whereas the Chafe et al. volume presents a variety of papers looking at the functions of evidentials in a few languages (including descriptions of the extended meanings of evidentials, such as mirativity), Aikhenvald was the first to present an encompassing typology of evidential systems

based on a large number of languages. However, one of the challenges facing typological studies of evidentiality is that, because there are so many descriptive studies for evidentials in various languages, the descriptions and terminology of different studies is not always consistent or rigorously verifiable (cf. Matthewson 2004). There is an emerging branch of research which approaches this problem by developing a more theoretically informed and testable methodology for investigating evidential categories (cf. Faller 2002; Matthewson et al. 2008; Peterson 2010; a.o.). A result of this is that we are now better equipped with a range of tools derived in contemporary semantic and pragmatic theory that allow us to develop the kinds of field methodologies we need for both investigating and explaining evidential meaning. We hope this collection of papers contributes to this line of research.

References

Aikhenvald, A., and R. M. W. Dixon, ed. 2003. *Studies in evidentiality*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Chafe, Wallace L., and J. Nichols. 1986. Evidentiality: the linguistic coding of epistemology. *Advances in Discourse Processes XX*. Norwood, N J: Ablex.

Faller, M. 2002. Semantics and Pragmatics of Evidentials in Cuzco Quechua. Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford.

Izvorski, R. 1997. The Present Perfect as Epistemic Modal. In *Proceedings of SALT VII*, ed. A. Lawson, 222-239, Ithaca, NY: DMLL Publications, Cornell University

Matthewson, L. 2004. On the methodology of semantic fieldwork. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 70:369-415.

Matthewson, L., H. Rullmann, and Henry Davis. 2008. Evidentials as epistemic modals: Evidence from St'át'imcets. In *Linguistic variation yearbook*, ed. J.V. Craenenbroeck, volume 7. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Peterson, T. 2010. Epistemic Modality and Evidentiality in Gitksan at the Semantics-Pragmatics Interface. Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia.