



Semantics & Pragmatics SoSe 2021

Lecture 11: Evidentiality

15/06/2021, Christian Bentz



Q&A

Tutorial 5:

- ▶ *When we use connectives in a type-theoretic logical language, then do the expression we connect have to be of the same type? E.g. $C(A) \wedge A(x)$.*

The clause is even more restrictive: Whenever you use a connective the expressions connected have to be of type t . Note that in this case we are essentially back to the level of propositional logic: Everything which is combined by using connectives is either true or false, hence, the truth or falshood of the overall expression follows straightforwardly from the truth-table definitions of the connectives.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Q&A

Tutorial 5:

- ▶ *Is the order of lambda abstractions of variables relevant?*

It depends what you mean by “relevant”. As pointed out in Gamut 1991 Volume 2, p. 107-108 (see also Lecture 8), the orders of abstractions can make a difference for the natural language interpretation of an expression: If A represents ‘admire’ and $A(y)(x)$ represents ‘ x admires y ’ (remember that by convention the subject is put last here), then $\lambda y \lambda x (A(y)(x))$ would represent ‘admires’ (i.e. active) and $\lambda x \lambda y (A(y)(x))$ would represent ‘is admired by’.

However, note that we mainly discussed the syntactic clauses of how to apply lambda abstraction and conversion, and according to these, both orders are valid.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Q&A

Tutorial 5: Exercise 3

- ▶ *In the case of predicates in (c), (f), i.e. H for ‘hits’ and R for ‘run’ is it necessary to use different variables X, Y to represent these?*

Yes, note that this is a crucial difference to predicate logic: In type-theoretic logic it is necessary to keep track of which type a predicate constant or variable has in order to perform the correct functional application. H is of type $\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$, while R is of type $\langle e, t \rangle$. Hence, X and Y also need to be of the respective types. I now put X and Y in the translation key as well in order to make this clearer.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Overview

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 10

Section 2: Introduction to Evidentiality

Definition

Grammatical Marking

Primary vs. Secondary Functions

Evidentiality vs. Epistemic Modality

Section 3: Evidentiality vs. Epistemic Modality

Evidentiality and Truth-Conditions

Two Types of Evidentials

Section 4: Evidentiality in Languages of the World

Semantic Distinctions of Evidentiality

Coding of Evidentiality

Summary

References



Section 1: Recap of Lecture 10



Grammaticalized Modality

“[...] we will focus our attention on the kinds of modality which can be expressed **grammatically**, e.g. by *verbal affixation, particles, or auxiliary verbs*.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 293.

- (1) John *could* smoke.
- (2) John *must* smoke.
- (3) Jumbo *should* like Bambi.

Note: The idea of “grammaticalized markers” of modality (or any other linguistic category) is that there are strongly *conventionalized* markers available to the speaker to encode a particular grammatical function, rather than spontaneously circumscribing it. In English, for example, rather than saying, “In the past I go ...” or “Some time ago I go ...”, we typically say “I went ...”.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References

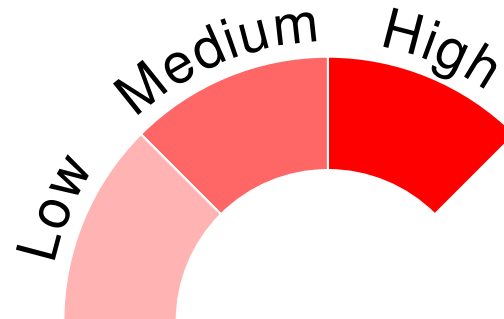


Modal Strength (aka Force)

Statements can express stronger or weaker **commitment to the truth** of the so-called base proposition. The example sentences below are ordered in decreasing strength.

Kroeger (2019), p. 294.

- (4) Arthur **must/has to** be home.
- (5) Arthur **should** be home.
- (6) Arthur **might** be home.



Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Modal Type (aka Flavor): Epistemic vs. Root

“**Epistemic modality** is often said to be “speaker-oriented”, because it encodes possibility or necessity in light of the speaker’s knowledge. **Non-epistemic** modal marking reflects some facet of the circumstances surrounding the described situation or event [...]”

Kroeger (2019), p. 307.

- (7) John didn’t show up for work. He *must* be sick.
[spoken by co-worker; Epistemic]
- (8) John didn’t show up for work. He *must* be fired.
[spoken by boss; Deontic (type of Root modality)]

Note: Non-epistemic modal marking is *rooted* in the particular *circumstances* of the *situation*. This is why it is variously called **Root**, **Circumstantial** or **Situational** Modality.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

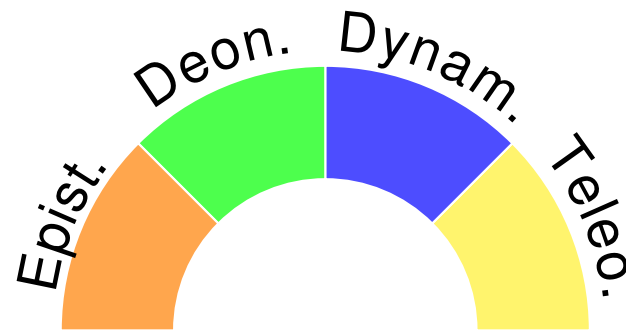
References



Further Modal Types (aka Flavors)

The names for modal subtypes are mostly derived from Ancient Greek terms.

- ▶ **Epistemic**
(from Ancient Greek *επιστημη*, “knowledge”)
- ▶ **Deontic**
(from Ancient Greek *δεν*, “obligation, duty”)
- ▶ **Dynamic**
(from Ancient Greek *δυναμις*, “power”)
- ▶ **Teleological**
(from Ancient Greek *τελος*, “goal, purpose”).



Note: There are further types discussed in the literature. For instance, **Bouletic (Boulomaic)** (from Ancient Greek *βουλομαι*, “to desire/want”). However, the more types we introduce, the harder it gets to clearly distinguish them. For instance, *to have a desire* and *to have a goal* are conceptually very similar.

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 10

Section 2: Introduction to Evidentiality

Section 3: Evidentiality vs. Epistemic Modality

Section 4: Evidentiality in Languages of the World

Summary

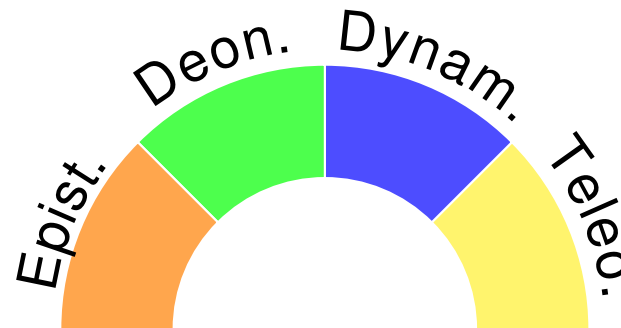
References



Polysemy of Modal Auxiliaries

In several languages, **modal auxiliaries** can be used for different types of modality. This might suggest that they are **polysemous**. However, in Kroeger (2019), p. 304 it is argued that they are not in fact polysemous, but rather **indeterminate** to start with (i.e. as a lexical entry), and then get assigned a particular type of modality by context.

- (9) It **has to** be raining. [Seeing people outside with umbrellas]
- (10) Visitors **have to** leave by six pm. [hospital regulations]
- (11) John **has to** sneeze.
- (12) To get home in time, you **have to** take a taxi.



Section 1: Recap of Lecture 10

Section 2: Introduction to Evidentiality

Section 3: Evidentiality vs. Epistemic Modality

Section 4: Evidentiality in Languages of the World

Summary

References



The Adverbial Phrase Test

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References

- (13) EPISTEMIC:
(In view of the available evidence,) John must/may be the murderer.
- (14) DEONTIC:
(In view of his parents' orders,) John may watch TV, but he must go to bed at 8pm.
- (15) ABILITY/DYNAMIC:
(In view of his physical abilities,) John can lift 200 kg.

Note: If we come to the conclusion that the adverbial phrases in parentheses are not redundant, then this supports the idea that type of modality is not lexically specified, but inferred from context.



Modal Logical Operators

The **strength of modality** as discussed above is represented by two **modal operators** which represent the extreme ends of the spectrum:

$$\diamond p : \textit{it is possible that } p \quad (1)$$

$$\square p : \textit{it is necessary that } p \quad (2)$$

Modality in this sense can then be construed as **quantification over possible worlds**, e.g.

$$\diamond p \equiv \exists w[w \in p] \quad (3)$$

$$\square p \equiv \forall w[w \in p] \quad (4)$$

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Modal Propositional Logic

We defined the clauses of the syntax of a propositional logic language L in Lecture 4. In order to account for (simple, binary strength) modality, we just need to add one more syntactic clause:

(v) If ϕ is a formula in L , then $\Box\phi$ and $\Diamond\phi$ are too.

Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 21.

Examples of valid formulas

$\Box p$

$\Box\Diamond p$

$\Box p \vee \Diamond q$

$\neg\Diamond(p \wedge q)$

$p \rightarrow \Box\Diamond p$

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Home Features Chapters Languages References Authors

Feature 75A: Epistemic Possibility

This feature is described in the text of chapter 75 by Johan van der Auwera and Andreas Ammann

You may combine this feature with another one. Start typing the feature name or number in the field below.

Values	
● Verbal constructions	65
● Affixes on verbs	84
● Other	91

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Section 1: Recap of Lecture 10

Section 2: Introduction to Evidentiality

Section 3: Evidentiality vs. Epistemic Modality

Section 4: Evidentiality in Languages of the World

Summary

References

(16) John *may* have arrived. (Epistemic possibility)

(17) John *must* have arrived. (Epistemic necessity)

<https://wals.info/chapter/75>



Addition to Lecture 10

Modality and Truth-Conditions

“It is often claimed in the linguistics literature that **epistemic modality**, unlike other kinds of modality, **does not contribute to the truth conditions of the utterance**. [...]

The intuition underlying this view is that epistemic modality in natural language marks the degree and/or source of the speaker’s commitment to the embedded proposition.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 309, citing Papafragou (2006), p. 1688.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Addition to Lecture 10

Modality and Truth-Conditions

“However, some of the **standard tests for truth-conditional content** indicate that this is not the case: **both types of modality can be part of the proposition** and contribute to its truth conditions.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 309.

The Challenge Test

Is the epistemic modal marker part of what can be challenged about a proposition? – Yes ✓

- (18) A: John profited from the old man’s death, he *must* be the murderer.
B: That’s not true; he *could* be the murderer, but he doesn’t have to be.

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 10

Section 2: Introduction to Evidentiality

Section 3: Evidentiality vs. Epistemic Modality

Section 4: Evidentiality in Languages of the World

Summary

References



Addition to Lecture 10

The Yes-No Question Test

Can the epistemic modal marker be the focus of a yes-no question? – Yes ✓

(19) A: *Must* John be the murderer?

B: Yes, he *must*. or: No, he doesn't have to be.

(Note that *yes, he is*, or *no, he isn't* wouldn't work here.)

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Addition to Lecture 10

The Negation Test

Can the epistemic modal marker be negated by clausal negation, i.e. does negation scope over and hence include the modal marker as part of the negated proposition? – Sometimes ✓¹

- (20) Smith *cannot* be the candidate.
[epistemic reading: $\neg\Diamond p$ ✓; with p: Smith is the candidate.]
- (21) Smith *may not* be the candidate.
[epistemic reading: $\Diamond\neg p$ ✗]

¹In other languages, such as German or Malay, this test seems more clearly positive across different modal markers, as further discussed in Kroeger (2019), p. 310.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Addition to Lecture 10

Modality and Truth-Conditions

According to the discussion in Kroeger (2019) – and contrary to some claims in the linguistic literature – **epistemic modal markers** might be seen as **contributing to the truth-conditional content of a proposition**, rather than just merely expressing the degree of certainty about a proposition.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Section 2: Introduction to Evidentiality



Definition: Evidentiality

“Evidentiality is a **linguistic category** whose primary meaning is **source of information**... [T]his covers the way in which information was acquired, **without necessarily relating to the degree of speaker’s certainty** concerning the statement or whether it is true or not [...] To be considered as an evidential, a morpheme has to have ‘source of information’ as its **core meaning**; that is, the unmarked, or default interpretation.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 320, citing Aikhenvald (2004), p. 3.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References

(22) Tagalog (Austronesian, Phillipines)

Mabuti **raw** ang=ani.

good **HEARSAY** NOM=harvest

‘**They say** that the harvest is good.’

Kroeger (2019), p. 317, citing Schlachter & Otones 1972, p. 423.



Three Claims about Evidentiality

- ▶ **First claim:** It is a “linguistic category”, i.e. a **grammatical category** with grammatical markers (same as for modality).
- ▶ **Second claim:** These evidential markers have **source of information** as their core meaning.
- ▶ **Third claim:** Evidentiality is not “necessarily relating to the degree of speaker’s certainty”, i.e. it is **distinct from epistemic modality**.²

Kroeger (2019), p. 320–321.

²In a sense, this third claim is a subclaim of the second claim. While the second claim states more generally that evidentiality can be the core meaning of grammatical markers distinguished from tense, aspect, modality, etc., the third claim reinforces more specifically that evidentiality is not to be equated with epistemic (or any other kind of) modality.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



First Claim: Grammatical Marking

Similar as for to modality, most (if not all) languages likely have *some way of expressing source of information*, e.g. by circumscriptions such as *I have heard that p*, *I was told that p*, *they say that p*, etc.

However, when we talk about a language having a system of **evidential markers**, we refer to **grammaticalized markers**, e.g. affixes, particles, etc. which are used more consistently (sometimes they might even be obligatory), than spontaneous circumscriptions by “lexical means”.

Kroeger (2019), p. 320.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Second Claim: Core Meaning

In order for an affix, particle, etc. to be considered part of a paradigm of evidential markers, its **core meaning should be source of information**. For instance, according to the strict definition by Aikhenvald, the German *sollen* would not be considered an evidential marker.

Kroeger (2019), p. 320.

(23) German

Kim **soll** einen neuen Job angeboten bekommen haben.

Kim **should** a new job offered get have

‘Kim has **supposedly** been offered a new job.’

Kroeger (2019), p. 321, citing von Stechow (2006).

Note: However, establishing “core meanings” is notoriously hard, especially since new core meanings might arise through grammaticalization from secondary meanings. For example, morphological material with the primary function of marking modality or tense might more and more gravitate towards having a primarily evidential meaning.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Second Claim: Core Meaning

Markers can also develop **polysemy** between one grammatical function and another, e.g. *tense* marking and *evidential* marking. Good evidence for this being the case is if the same marker can be used recursively without being redundant.

Kroeger (2019), p. 322.

(24) Iranian Azerbaijani (Turkic)

zefer qazan-miş-**miş**-am
victory win-PRF-**INDIRECT**-1SG

‘**Reportedly** I have won.’

Given this example, we have evidence to assume that the marker *-miş* can indeed mark evidentiality independent of tense, but again it is hard to decide what is generally its “core meaning”.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Second Claim: Core Meaning

Given these problems, the question arises of how to tease apart **primary** from **secondary functions**, and hence how to determine the core meaning of a marker. In order to have convincing evidence, we need to assess situations where evidentiality can be in conflict with other grammatical functions, e.g. epistemic modality in the example below.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References

Huallaga Quechua (Quechuan)

- (25) Qam-pis maqa-ma-shka-nki=**mi**.
you-also hit-1.OBJ-PRF-2.SUBJ=**DIRECT**
'You also hit me (**I saw and/or felt it**).'
- (26) Qam-pis maqa-ma-shka-nki=**shi**.
you-also hit-1.OBJ-PRF-2.SUBJ=**HEARSAY**
'(**Someone told me that**) you also hit me.'

Kroeger (2019), p. 318, citing Weber (1989), p. 421.



Second Claim: Core Meaning

“In many contexts, the direct evidential =*mi* (which is optional) can be used to indicate certainty; and hearers may sometimes interpret the hearsay evidential =*shi* as indicating uncertainty on the part of the speaker.”

“However, when there is a **conflict between source of information and degree of commitment**, it is source of information that determines the choice of clitic.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 318, citing Weber (1989).

Huallaga Quechua (Quechuan)

- (27) [...] =**mi**. **x**
 [...] =**DIRECT**
 ‘My mother’s grandfather’s name was John.’
- (28) [...] =**shi**. **✓**
 [...] =**HEARSAY**
 ‘My mother’s grandfather’s name was John.’

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Third Claim: Distinction from Epistemic Modality

“Evidentials may acquire secondary meanings – of reliability, probability and possibility (known as epistemic extensions), but they do not have to [...] **Evidentiality is a category in its own right**, and not a subcategory of any modality [...] That evidentials may have semantic extensions related to probability and speaker’s evaluation of trustworthiness of information does not make evidentiality a kind of modality.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 321, citing Aikhenvald 2004, p. 7-8.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Section 3: Evidentiality vs. Epistemic Modality



Modality and Truth-Conditions

According to the discussion in Kroeger (2019) – and contrary to some claims in the linguistic literature – **epistemic modal markers** might be seen as **contributing to the truth-conditional content of a proposition**, rather than just merely expressing the degree of certainty about a proposition.

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 10

Section 2: Introduction to Evidentiality

Section 3: Evidentiality vs. Epistemic Modality

Section 4: Evidentiality in Languages of the World

Summary

References

Evidentiality and Truth-Conditions

“There is good evidence that evidential markers in a number of languages **do not contribute to propositional content** but function as illocutionary modifiers, and so must be distinct from epistemic modality.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 321.



Evidentiality: The Negation Test

If negation **can scope over the evidential marker**, then the evidential marker is considered to contribute to the truth-conditional content. If **negation cannot scope over the evidential marker**, then the evidential marker is not relevant for truth-conditions.

Cuzco Quechua (Quechuan)

- (29) Ines-qa mana=**s** qaynunchaw ñaña-n-ta-chu watuku-rqa-n.
Ines-TOP not=**REPORT** yesterday sister-3-ACC-NEG visit-PAST1-3
'**(Speaker was told that)** Ines didn't visit her sister yesterday.' ✓
'**(Speaker was not told that)** Ines visited her sister yesterday.' ✗

Kroeger (2019), p. 323, citing Faller (2002).

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Evidentiality: The Challenge Test³

The hearer can challenge the truth of the statement of the speaker given more direct evidence, but the **source of information cannot be challenged**. Hence, source of information is not part of the propositional content.

Cuzco Quechua (Quechuan)

- (30) Ines-qa qaynunchay ñaña-n-ta=**s** watuku-sqa.
Ines-TOP yesterday sister-ACC=**REPORT** vist-PAST2
'**(Speaker was told that)** Ines visited her sister yesterday.'
- (31) Mana=n chiqaq-chu. Manta-n-ta-lla=**n**✓ watuku-rqa-n.
not=DIRECT true-NEG mother-3-ACC-LIMIT=**DIRECT** visit-PAST1-3
'That's not true. She only visited her mother.'
- (32) Mana=n chiqaq-chu. Mana=**n**× chay-ta willa-rqa-sunki-chu.
not=DIRECT true-NEG not=DIRECT this-ACC tell-PAST1-3S.2O-NEG
'That's not true. You were not told this.'

Kroeger (2019), p. 323, citing Faller (2002).

³Also called the *Assent/Dissent Diagnostic*.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Two Types of Evidentials

“A number of languages have evidentials which behave much like those of Cuzco Quechua. However, there are other languages in which evidentials seem to contribute to the propositional content of the utterance [...].”

Kroeger (2019), p. 325, referring to Murray (2010).

Illocutionary⁴ evidentials: markers of evidentiality that do not contribute to the truth-conditional content, but that “add to or modify the sincerity conditions of the [speech] act”.

Kroeger (2019), p. 323, citing Faller (2002).

Propositional evidentials: markers of evidentiality that also contribute to the truth-conditional content.

⁴In speech act theory, the *illocutionary act* is the act which the speaker intends to perform by using a certain utterance. This is distinguished from the *locutionary act* (the act of speaking itself), and the *perlocutionary act* (the actual result achieved “by speaking” the utterance).

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Illocutionary Evidentials

Markers of evidentiality that **do not contribute to the truth-conditional content**, but that “add to or modify the sincerity conditions of the [speech] act”.

Kroeger (2019), p. 323, citing Faller (2002).

Cuzco Quechua

- (33) Para-sha-n=**si**.
rain-PROG-3=**REPORT**
'**(It is reported that)** it is raining.'
proposition: It is raining.

Note: This is the type of evidential that Aikhenvald (2004) would accept as a “true” evidential which is clearly distinct from epistemic modality.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Propositional Evidentials

A marker of evidentiality that also **contributes to the truth-conditional content.**

Kroeger (2019), p. 323.

German

- (34) Es **soll** regnen.
it **should** rain
'It is **supposedly** raining.'
proposition: It is **supposedly** raining.

Note: This type of evidential is much closer (potentially indistinguishable) from epistemic modality.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Section 4: Evidentiality in Languages of the World



Feature 77A: Semantic Distinctions of Evidentiality



This feature is described in the text of chapter 77 [Semantic Distinctions of Evidentiality](#) by [Ferdinand de Haan](#) [cite](#)

You may combine this feature with another one. Start typing the feature name or number in the field below.

× 77A: Semantic Distinctions of Evidentiality

Submit

Values

<input type="radio"/>	No grammatical evidentials	181
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Indirect only	166
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Direct and indirect	71

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 10

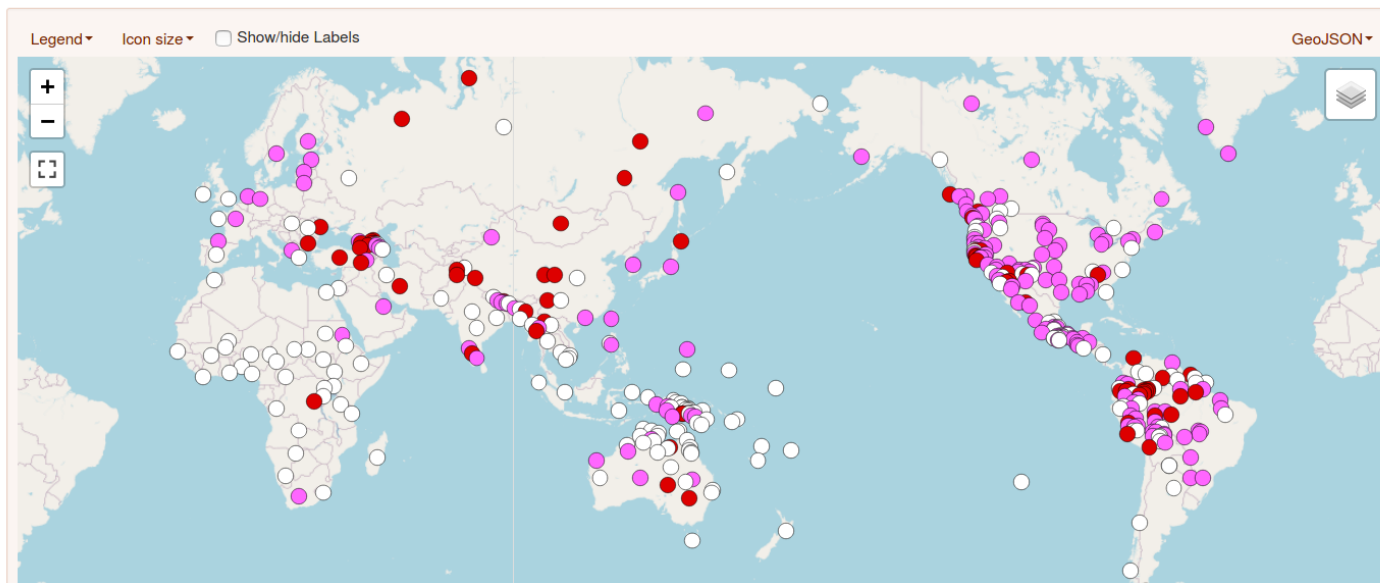
Section 2: Introduction to Evidentiality

Section 3: Evidentiality vs. Epistemic Modality

Section 4: Evidentiality in Languages of the World

Summary

References



(35) Der Film *soll* gut sein. (Indirect evidence)
'The movie is said to be good.'

<https://wals.info/chapter/77>



Feature 78A: Coding of Evidentiality



This feature is described in the text of chapter 78 [Coding of Evidentiality](#) by Ferdinand de Haan [cite](#)

You may combine this feature with another one. Start typing the feature name or number in the field below.

✕ 78A: Coding of Evidentiality

Values

<input type="radio"/>	No grammatical evidentials	181
<input type="radio"/>	Verbal affix or clitic	131
<input type="radio"/>	Part of the tense system	24
<input type="radio"/>	Separate particle	65
<input type="radio"/>	Modal morpheme	7
<input type="radio"/>	Mixed	10

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 10

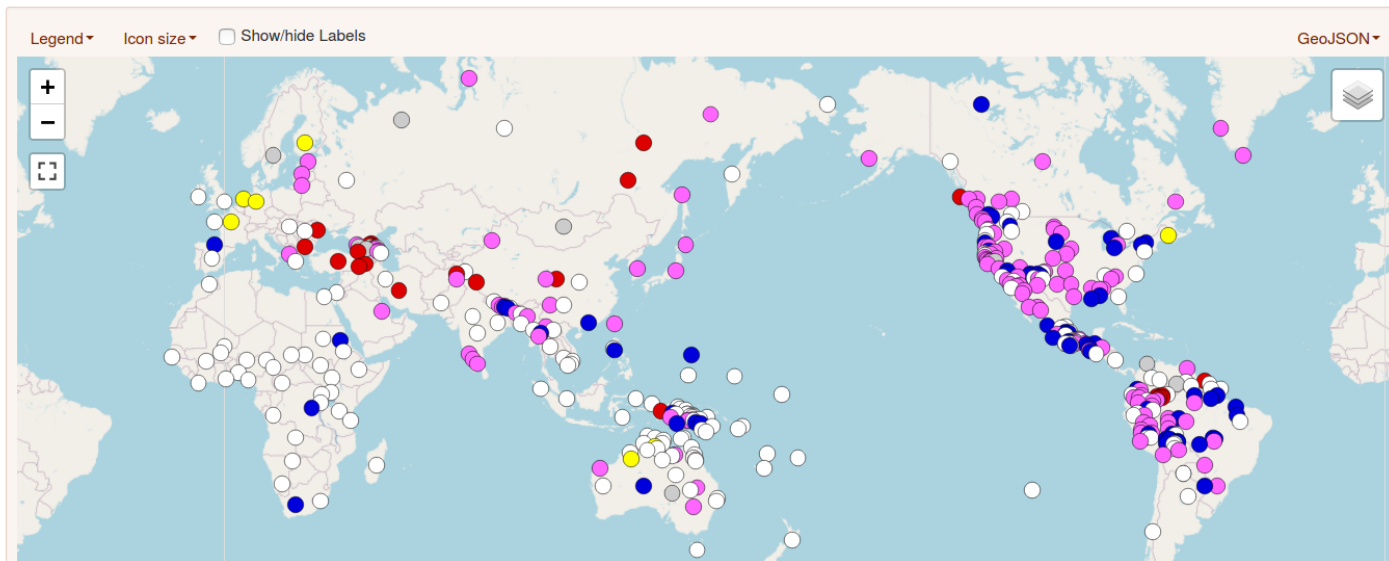
Section 2: Introduction to Evidentiality

Section 3: Evidentiality vs. Epistemic Modality

Section 4: Evidentiality in Languages of the World

Summary

References



(36) Der Film *so*ll gut sein. (Modal morpheme)
'The movie is said to be good.'

<https://wals.info/chapter/78>



Summary



Summary

- ▶ **Evidentiality** as a grammatical category refers to the expression of **source of information**.
- ▶ It is coded by some grammaticalized means in a considerable part of the world's languages (237/418 or ca. 57% in the respective WALS chapter).
- ▶ In a strict definition, it is **separated from epistemic modality**, i.e. it *can but does not have to* relate to the certainty of the speaker.
- ▶ Further subcategorizations such as **illocutionary vs. propositional evidentials** have been introduced to further account for the diversity of systems found in the world's languages.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



References



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Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 10

Section 2:
Introduction to
Evidentiality

Section 3:
Evidentiality vs.
Epistemic
Modality

Section 4:
Evidentiality in
Languages of the
World

Summary

References



Thank You.

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