DIAGNOSING THE SEMANTIC STATUS OF EVIDENTIALS

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Evidentials are expressions that signal the source of the semantically determined information conveyed by an utterance and are often analyzed as dealing with speech acts. The talk is devoted to a metasemantic discussion of the status of evidentials. According to one line of research (Matthewson 2012), all evidentials are garden variety epistemic modals. According to another (Faller 2007; Matthewson et al. 2007), evidentials across languages fall into two semantic classes: (i) *modal*; and (ii) *illocutionary*. I show that current theories, even though motivated by superficially different cross-linguistic data, make in fact very similar predictions. I then provide new empirical diagnostics that would distinguish between alternative approaches.

Shortcomings of existing diagnostics   The *modal* view on evidentiality, rooted in the typological tradition, was pioneered by Izvorski's (1997) analysis of Bulgarian evidential perfect as a Kratzerian epistemic modal with an indirect evidence presupposition. Superficially different data gave rise to *illocutionary* approaches, wherein evidentials deal with the structure of speech acts (Cuzco Quechua, Faller 2002; Cheyenne, Murray 2010, 2014). Below I show that properties that have initially motivated illocutionary approaches can in fact be handled within theories of each type, and thus do not constitute an argument in favor of either of them (pace Matthewson (2012), who regards the mere possibility of a modal analysis as evidence for the modal view).

● EVIDENTIAL CONTRADICTIONS Across languages (AnderBois 2014), hearsay markers allow statements of the form $[\text{Ev}p] \wedge [\neg p]$, where the speaker knows the scope proposition to be false. For example, sentences such as Georgian (1) allow explicit follow-ups *But that is not true*:

(1)   *Hearsay context: There is a report that California legalized marijuana.*
       kalifornia-s   k'anonier-i **gauxdia**   marihuan-is   gamoq'eneba.
       California-DAT legal-NOM   make.3SG:S.3SG:O.**IND:PST** marijuana-GEN usage.NOM
       'California legalized marijuana, *I hear*'.

Might and *must*, on the other hand, do not allow flat-out contradictions: #*There must be water on Mars, but there isn't* (though see Lassiter 2016). Faller (2002); Murray (2010) take the contrast between (a) hearsay markers and (b) English modal auxiliaries as a strong argument for an illocutionary analysis wherein contradictions are licit because hearsay markers merely present their scope proposition without asserting it. Such evidentials are argued to be a distinct semantic category from epistemics. However, a modal analysis of evidential contradictions is also possible. Faller (2011) (see also Kratzer 2012) treats hearsay markers as modals with a non-realistic modal base, wherein the world of evaluation is not one of the p-worlds. Furthermore, as Yalcin (2007) points out, the standard Kratzerian analysis of epistemic modals does not rule out epistemic contradictions. By extension, (Izvorski 1997)-style approaches predict the availability of evidential contradictions. Therefore, this property is not an argument for or against any of the existing views.

● SCOPE Scope with respect to clause-mate operators (e.g. tense) is often used as a semantic diagnostic (Faller 2007; McCready and Ogata 2007, a.o.): modal evidentials are supposed to allow narrow scope construals, while illocutionary evidentials are expected to only take wide scope. This view assumes that speech acts are scopally inert and equates scopal variability with semantic variation. However, Krifka (2014) argues that speech acts may scopally interact with some operators. Furthermore, parameterizing scopal behavior does not require postulating different semantic categories, cf. research on modals and negation (Iatridou and Zeijlstra 2013; Yanovich 2013). Thus, scopal behavior of evidentials is not an argument for or against any of the existing views.

What makes a speech act   Given that many properties that initially motivated the illocutionary view can be reformulated without making reference to speech acts, it is essential to come up with tools that would diagnose potential illocutionary evidentials and speech-act-hood in general. I propose that the difference between *private beliefs* and *discourse commitments* (cf. Gunlogson 2003) should be used as a baseline, and provide a guiding parallel from research on imperatives. Imperatives can be treated similarly to deontic modals (Kaufmann 2012). However, Lauer and Condoravdi (2016) highlight a commitment-based difference between the two: only imperatives (2a), but not vanilla deontics (2b), require conditional endorsement in conditionalized sentences:

(2)   *Context: Sven suggests that we have the workshop dinner at his small apartment.*

a.   *Cleo*: If you want to have a dinner at your place, **move** to a bigger place.
Sven: Okay, I've been thinking of moving anyways.
Cleo: #That's not what I meant: I wanted to convince you to not host a party.

b.   *Cleo*: If you want to have a dinner at your place, you **should** move to a bigger place.
Sven: Okay, I've been thinking of moving anyways.
Cleo: ✓That's not what I meant: I wanted to convince you to not host a party.

(adapted from Lauer and Condoravdi 2016: ex.30-31)

With an imperative (2a), Cleo's goal is to outline a way to achieve Sven's preference. With a modal (2b), Cleo's goal could also be to make him give up his preference. Until such new data become available for evidentials, the illocutionary view is not justified empirically, even though it is possible to treat them as dealing with communicative intentions (cf. AnderBois 2017; Korotkova 2017).

What makes an epistemic modal   The literature does not offer a clear-cut procedure for identifying epistemic modals. Faller (2002) uses English modal auxiliaries as a baseline, but they lack semantic properties that other expressions of modality have (e.g. gradability; Lassiter 2015) or have syntactic quirks not shared even by their Germanic cousins. Matthewson (2012) proceeds by probing whether the semantics for evidentials can be expressed within the Kratzerian apparatus. However, classifying evidentials as modals based on this criterion is akin to classifying attitude verbs as modals (cf. Hacquard 2013). I propose that *assessment-sensitivity* should be used as a property defining epistemic modality as a semantic category. Even in root declarative sentences, it is not straightforward whose body of knowledge a modal is after (Weatherson and Egan 2011; MacFarlane 2014), which gives rise to complex patterns e.g. of (dis)agreement about modal claims:

(3)   *Context: Everyone acknowledges that Joe might be in Berkeley. No one thinks there are going to be grounds to assert that he is in Boston. The point is to settle whether he might be in Boston.*

A: Joe **might** be in Boston.
B: That's wrong.

(i) $= \neg$ 'Joe might be in Boston'. **disagreement about** $\diamond p$
(ii) $\neq \neg$ 'Joe is in Boston'. **disagreement about** p

(adapted from MacFarlane 2011: 148)

(3) is an example of disagreement about the likelihood of p, and such dialogues are often taken to argue that epistemics track publicly available knowledge (von Fintel and Gillies 2008, 2010, 2011). Until such new data become available for evidentials, the modal view is not justified empirically, even though it is possible to treat them as dealing with beliefs in view of some body of knowledge.

Conclusion   The goal of the talk is to provide a long-overdue discussion of the theories of evidentiality. I start by showing that the current debate on the semantic status of evidentials lacks formally-explicit tools that would differentiate between the existing approaches. I then offer new theory-neutral diagnostics

that may resolve the debate and that may therefore shed light on the place of evidentiality among other categories.

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