

A possible worlds semantics for (illocutionary) evidentials

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The precise relationship between evidentiality, the linguistic marking of the speaker's source of information for a claim, and epistemic modality, the marking of the speaker's evaluation of the truth of a proposition in terms of necessity, possibility or degree of certainty, is not yet fully understood. While these two phenomena are clearly distinct conceptually, it is not always possible to establish two distinct categories empirically in a given language because the two concepts are often expressed simultaneously by a single element. For example, English epistemic *must* expresses that the speaker *s* considers the proposition expressed *p* a necessity and in addition indicates that *s* has inferred *p* and does not have direct evidence for it. The two concepts are furthermore closely related in that the type of source information a speaker has will to a great extent determine the speaker's evaluation of the truth of the proposition.

Within formal semantics, evidentials are often analyzed as quantifiers over possible worlds with evidential presuppositions, that is, as a kind of epistemic modal. In this talk I will explore to what extent such an analysis is viable for evidentials that do not contribute to the main proposition expressed/at-issue content such as the evidentials of Cuzco Quechua (CQ). CQ has four evidentials which I have analyzed in previous work as contributing to the illocutionary level of meaning. The Direct indicates that the speaker *s* has direct evidence for *p*, the Reportative that *s* was told that *p*, the Conjectural that *s* conjectures that *p*, and the perceived evidence Inferential that *s* infers that *p* perceived evidence. I will argue that all four can be analyzed as quantifiers over possible worlds, because even the non-inferential evidentials involve some degree of inference. However, since their main contribution is to indicate what type of evidence this inference is based on, I will argue that the evidential requirement should not be analyzed as a presupposition. Instead, I propose that evidentials assert the existence of a set of facts acquired by direct means or from reports, from which *p* follows. If we assume that, in general, speakers come to believe a proposition *p* on the basis of some evidential event via a (possibly minimal) amount of reasoning, the difference between epistemic modals and evidentials lies in what part of this process they focus on. Epistemic modals focus on the inferential part, and evidentials on the evidential event. Unmodified assertions make no reference to this process at all but simply assert the proposition itself.