The locus of evidentiality in English
Cassandra Chapman, Diane Doran and Daniel Schmidtke

We present evidence from a forced-choice acceptability judgement task demonstrating that the use of copy raising constructions in English is constrained by three different sub-dimensions of evidentiality: Evidence Type, Strength and Source (Matthewson to appear; Asudeh and Toivonen 2012), but not by Evidence Location, which did not significantly predict acceptability.

Background Evidential constructions provide grammatically encoded information about the evidence a speaker has for their assertion. It has been argued (Asudeh and Toivonen 2012; Rett and Hyams 2014) that in English, copy raising structures (e.g., John looks like he is cooking) mark direct evidentiality, whereas unraised structures (e.g., It looks like John is cooking) are unmarked for evidentiality. The former sentence is only felicitous in a situation where John is observed in the kitchen, whereas the latter can be used when one simply sees pots boiling on John’s stove. In an online felicity judgement task, Rett and Hyams (2014) confirmed this basic evidential pattern in English. However, a recent proposal by Matthewson (to appear) argues that evidentiality consists of three sub-dimensions, presented in the chart below, which may each have a direct or indirect value, and that languages differ in which dimensions they incorporate into their grammars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence Type</td>
<td>Sensory information.</td>
<td>Reports or reasoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence Strength</td>
<td><em>Best</em> evidence possible for event.</td>
<td><em>Not best:</em> Lacking best possible evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence Location</td>
<td>Perceive event itself.</td>
<td>Perceive results of event.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goal Our study aims to test and further refine the results from Rett and Hyams (2014) in order to examine precisely which of Matthewson’s evidence dimensions are encoded in English.

Experiment Participants rated the acceptability of evidential sentences as well as a declarative control on a scale of 1 (unacceptable) to 6 (acceptable) in response to a context, as in (1).

(1) Context: Idan walks into the house and sees that his wife is in the kitchen. She is wearing an apron that is full of flour and has chocolate on her face. Idan thinks to himself:

  a. Unraised: It seems/sounds/looks like she has been baking.
  b. Copy raised: She seems/sounds/looks like she has been baking.
  c. Declarative: She has been baking.

In the present experiment, contexts were manipulated such that they represented Matthewson’s three evidential dimensions. Furthermore, to test Asudeh and Toivonen (2012)’s argument that direct perception of the sentential subject is required to use a copy raising construction, Evidence Source was also included as a variable in our manipulations. Copy raised and unraised constructions were counterbalanced across participants.

Results By-participant z-scores of judgement ratings served as a dependent variable in a linear mixed-effects regression model. Results of the model indicate that participants were significantly more likely to rate unraised structures as more acceptable than copy raised structures. Participants were also significantly more likely to provide higher acceptability ratings when the Evidence Type was direct, compared to when it was indirect or there was no evidence. When Evidence Strength was *not best*, participants were significantly more likely to rate sentences highly compared to when sentences contained *best* evidence. Finally, when Evidence Source was direct, they were significantly more likely to provide higher ratings compared to when it was indirect. Interestingly, the predictor Evidence Location did not improve model fit. To summarize, our experiment provides further empirical support for the evidential nature of copy raising structures. We also take these findings as a validation of Matthewson’s theory of parametrized evidential dimensions.
References

