

A diachronic typology of evidential contrasts (from a Himalayan perspective)¹

Evidentiality is traditionally defined “as a linguistic category whose primary meaning is source of information” (Aikhenvald 2004: 3). Comparative diachronic-functional accounts of grammaticalized evidential distinctions in the Greater Himalayan Region (GHR), however, convey a picture of the phenomenon which strikingly differs from that presented in Aikhenvald (2004, 2018). Most notably, while Aikhenvald and the linguistic mainstream along with her (following Willett 1988: 91) exclude agentive markers from the discussion, research on grammaticalized evidentiality in the GHR suggests that a descriptively adequate account must include such markers. In fact, most of the evidential contrasts we find in this region involve one verb form which mainly occurs when the speaker/addressee is the subject in a statement/question (which may be called ‘egophoric’, cf. Tournadre 1991; Floyd, Norcliffe & San Roque 2018) and another used mainly when s/he isn’t (‘allophoric’). However, nowhere do the contrasting verb forms keep to their ego- and allophoric domains in a strict fashion, and their overreaching uses allow us to distinguish many different types of evidential contrasts [6].

The evidential contrasts I have been able to identify in the Greater Himalayan Region all share the following characteristics:

- i. Contrasting verb forms are defined against each other, and hence, the contrasts are mostly binary.
- ii. While the verb forms have contrasting implications as to how one knows what is being profiled in a statement, one of them – what I propose to call the ‘insider evidential’ (roughly ‘egophoric’) – always implies longer and/or more immediate personal involvement than the other (the ‘outsider evidential’ ~ ‘allophoric’).
- iii. Contrasting verb forms have a shared tense-aspect (TA) value (their *tertium comparationis*, reflecting the context in which their contrasting evidential implications became conventionalized).
- iv. Insider and outsider evidentials reflect the perspective of the same origo, which corresponds to the speaker in statements, the addressee in questions, and the source in reported speech clauses [7].

In accordance with these characteristics, we may identify a diachronic mechanism [8] which sets evidential verb forms defined in contrasts apart from those defined in their own right (such as various existing types of inferential and reportative markers). The outcome of this mechanism, viz. the meaning (which combines a TA-value with an evidential implication) of an evidential verb form (X) contrasting with another verb form (Y), appears to be determined by the following parameters:

- a. the meaning of its own diachronic source (X);
- b. the meaning of the verb form (Y) with which X conventionally became contrasted;
- c. the context(s) in which X and Y became contrasted;
- d. the shared TA-value X and Y have (or had) in this/these context(s).

This diachronic scenario may be viewed as an extension of Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca’s (1994) ‘source determination hypothesis’, and it appears not to have been considered in any of the cross-linguistic literature on evidentiality, such as Chafe & Nichols (1986), Willet (1988), Johanson & Utas (2000), and Aikhenvald (2004, 2018).

¹ This typology was developed in the course of the project ‘Evidentiality in Time and Space’ funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (grant number 189281).

[6] Zemp, Marius, Benjamin Brosig and Fernando Zúñiga. 2021. On the link between evidentiality and egophoricity in the Greater Himalayan Region. Presentation at the 54th annual meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea in Athens, August 31–September 3, 2021.

https://www.academia.edu/61772239/On_the_link_between_evidentiality_and_egophoricity_in_the_Greater_Himalayan_Region?ri_id=363717

[7] Zemp, Marius. 2020. Evidentials and their pivot in Tibetic and neighboring Himalayan languages. *Functions of Language* 27(1): 29–54.

<https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/foL.20003.zem>

[8] Zemp, Marius. 2022. Looking at evidentials from the roof of the world. Presentation at the workshop ‘Typologie des systèmes évidentiels/Typology of evidential systems’ organized by the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) in Paris, February 25, 2022.

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.inalco.fr/sites/default/files/asset/document/zemp_grammaticalized_evidentiality_in_the_greater_himalayan_region.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjht6DKkvmFAxVR2gIHHVG4BHgQFnoECBMQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3Goy1uGCdGozpG1O6d7tUD