

CLASS MEETING #3:
TIBETAN INDIRECT EVIDENTIALS AS PERFORMATIVE EPISTEMIC MODALS

Main Reading: Chapter 2 of Garrett's Thesis ([Garrett 2002](#))

Goals: There are three goals today.

1. Learn about performative sentences.
 2. Learn about epistemic modality.
 3. Start thinking about connections between epistemic modality and evidentiality.
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Performatives

- (1) I (hereby) christen this ship "Andrea Doria".
- (2) I (hereby) declare you husband and wife.

Epistemic Modality

A Puzzle About Epistemic Modality

Assumption: *must* p is true in w iff p is true in all worlds compatible with what is known in w, i.e. in all epistemically accessible worlds

Fact: w is invariably compatible with what is known in w

Thus: if *must* p is true in w, then p is true in w

Puzzle: *must* p seems like a weaker statement than p. How can that be if it entails p?

Epistemic Modality and Evidentiality

Izvorski:

Evidentiality is a linguistic category encoding speaker-oriented qualifications of propositions along two dimensions: (i) in terms of the evidence they are based on, e.g. *DIRECT* (visual/auditory, etc.) or *INDIRECT* (report or inference), and (ii) with respect to the speaker's commitment to their truth ((dis)belief/agnosticism) (cf. Chafe and Nichols 1986 for discussion and case studies). The two dimensions – whether the proposition is based on perceptual evidence and whether the speaker believes in its truth – are logically independent. Yet natural language typically treats propositions based on perceptual evidence on the part of the speaker as propositions asserted by the speaker to be true; similarly, if a speaker marks a proposition as based not on first-hand evidence, he or she typically expresses non-commitment to the truth of the proposition. This is why it is more useful to think of the terms *DIRECT* and *INDIRECT* (which appear to be the generally accepted ones in the literature on evidentiality) as making a distinction based not on whether or not the evidence is perceptual, but on whether or not the evidence justifies the speaker's belief in a proposition.

Some of Izvorski's data (with English *apparently* standing in for the Bulgarian evidential perfect as well):

- (3) Knowing how much John likes wine ...
 - a. ... he must have drunk all the wine yesterday.
 - b. #... he apparently drank all the wine yesterday.
- (4) A: John must have drunk all the wine.
 A': But I have no evidence for that.
 A'': # But I have no reason for believing that.
- (5) A: John apparently drank all the wine.
 A': # But I have no evidence for that.
 A'': # But I have no reason for believing that.

- (6) Maria apparently kissed Ivan.
 A: # (Actually) I witnessed it./ # (Actually) I know that for a fact.
- (7) Apparently, Ivan passed the exam.
 B: This isn't true.
 = 'It is not true that Ivan passed the exam.'
 ≠ 'It is not true that it is said / you infer that Ivan passed the exam.'

Let W be the set of possible worlds and let f be the function that assigns to every possible world the set of propositions that constitute the available indirect evidence (for the core proposition) in that world.

[Then on top of that an ordering of worlds ranking those higher where the indirect evidence is truly indicative of what happens.] This set may include propositions like *Normally, Mary is reliable as a source of information* or *If there are empty wine bottles in someone's office, that person has drunk the wine*.

Consider [a] case where the indirect evidence determining the modal base is a rumor that p and the ordering source concerns the reliability of rumors. If the world of evaluation w is such that rumors are normally right, we will consider those accessible worlds where it is true that there is a rumor that p and that rumors are right; $EV - p$ will assert that all those worlds are p -worlds.

If, however, rumors are considered very unreliable as evidence, the set of accessible worlds where it is true that there is rumor that p and the rumor is right will be very restricted; hence, the resulting interpretation that p is only slightly possible in w .

Confusion between inference about w and quantificational force of modal.

Strength of inference about w depends on likelihood that w is in the set of highest ranked p -worlds.

Reading for next week: Chapter 3 of Faller's Thesis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GARRETT, Edward John: 2002. *Evidentiality and Assertion in Tibetan*. Ph.D. thesis, UCLA.