

# MODES OF ASSERTION

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### *I.1 A Simple Picture*

- (I) The Red Sox won the pennant.
- (2) (I) is true in world  $w$  iff (= if and only if) the Red Sox won the pennant in  $w$ .
- (3)  $\llbracket \text{(I)} \rrbracket = \{w: \text{the Red Sox won the pennant in } w\}$
- (4) (I) is true in world  $w$  iff  $w \in \llbracket \text{(I)} \rrbracket$ .
- (5) Beck believes that the Red Sox won the pennant.
- (6) (5) is true in world  $w$  iff Beck believes in  $w$  that the Red Sox won the pennant.
- (7) (5) is true in world  $w$  iff every world  $w'$  compatible with what Beck believes in  $w$  is a world in which the Red Sox won the pennant.
- (8) (5) is true in world  $w$  iff every world  $w'$  compatible with what Beck believes in  $w$  is such that  $w' \in \llbracket \text{(I)} \rrbracket$ .
- (9)  $\llbracket \text{(5)} \rrbracket = \{w: \text{every world } w' \text{ compatible with what Beck believes in } w \text{ is such that } w' \in \llbracket \text{(I)} \rrbracket\}$ .
- (IO) Menander doubts that Beck believes that the Red Sox won the pennant.
- (II) A speaker who asserts a sentence  $\phi$  proposes that the participants in the conversation all add  $\llbracket \phi \rrbracket$  to the common ground.

- (I2) The common ground is a body of common assumptions that is meant to approximate "the truth". One hopes that the actual world is one of the worlds compatible with the common ground.

### 1.2 Modulation

- (I3) The Red Sox won the pennant, I  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{hear} \\ \text{am sorry to say} \\ \text{believe} \\ \text{admit} \end{array} \right\}$ .
- (I4) The Red Sox, (\*as)  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{I} \\ \text{Mary} \end{array} \right\}$  believe(s), won the pennant.
- (I5) The Red Sox  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{apparently} \\ \text{unfortunately} \\ \text{definitely} \\ \text{admittedly} \end{array} \right\}$  won the pennant.
- (I6) The Red Sox won the pennant, which  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{I had (not) expected} \\ \text{Mary was glad to hear} \end{array} \right\}$ .
- (I7) The Red Sox  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{must} \\ \text{may} \end{array} \right\}$  have won the pennant.
- (I8) Here is a wild guess: the Red Sox won the pennant.
- (I9) The damn Red Sox won the pennant.
- (I20) The Red Sox "won" the pennant.
- (I21) URMSON ON "PARENTHETICAL VERBS"

[W]hen these verbs are used in the first person of the present tense, as is very clear when they occur grammatically in parenthesis, the assertion proper is contained in the indicative clause with which they are associated, which is implied to be both true and reasonable. They themselves have not, in such a use, any descriptive sense but rather function as signals guiding the hearer to a proper appreciation of the statement in its context, social, logical, or evidential. They are not part of the statement made, nor additional statements, but function with regard to a statement made rather as 'READ WITH CARE' functions in relation to a subjoined notice, or as the foot stamping and saluting can function in the Army to make clear that one is making an official report. Perhaps

they can be compared to such stage-directions as ‘said in a mournful (confident) tone’ with reference to the lines of the play. They help the understanding and assessment of what is said rather than being part of what is said.

### 1.3 *Embedding*

- (22) a. It is obvious that Parker made a big mistake.  
 b. Parker,  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{it is obvious} \\ \text{obviously} \end{array} \right\}$ , made a big mistake.
- (23) We have to fire him because he obviously made a big mistake.
- (24) We have to fire him because it is obvious that he made a big mistake.
- (25) If it is obvious that he made a big mistake, he will have to be fired.
- (26) If he obviously made a big mistake, he will have to be fired.
- (27) If the Red Sox,  $^*(\text{as}) \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{I} \\ \text{Mary} \end{array} \right\}$  believe(s), won the pennant, I’ll order world series tickets.

Suspicion: we need to distinguish parentheticals (side information, as in *as I believe*) from assertion modulators (as in *I believe*).

*as I believe* = *which is what I believe – by the way*

Perhaps, we should read:

GREEN, M. S.: 2000. “Illocutionary force and semantic content”. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 23(5): 435–473

- (28) Task: compare all the different devices on various kinds of embedding:
- John believes that . . .
  - Mary stayed home because . . .
  - If . . . , the debate will be difficult.
  - etc.

#### 1.4 *More Comparisons*

Compare to performatives:

- (29) I promise you five dollars if you mow the lawn.
- (30) I pronounce you husband and wife.
- (31) I christen this ship “Prunella”.

Compare to modal expressions:

[...]

#### 1.5 *Evidentials*

- (32) ANDERSON’S DEFINITION OF “EVIDENTIALS” (from Anderson 1986)
  - a. Evidentials show the kind of justification for a factual claim which is available to the person making the claim.
  - b. Evidentials are not themselves the main predication of the clause, but are rather a specification added to a factual claim *about something else*.
  - c. Evidentials have the indication of evidence as their primary meaning, not only as a pragmatic inference.
  - d. Morphologically, evidentials are inflections, clitics, or other free syntactic elements (not compounds or derivational forms).
- (33) TYPES OF SOURCES OF INFORMATION (from Willet 1988)
  - a. Direct – Attested – Visual/Auditory/Other Sensory
  - b. Indirect
    - (i) Reported – Secondhand/Thirdhand/Folklore
    - (ii) Inference – Results/Reasoning

*Quechua*

- (34) -mi
- a. Pilar bread-mi ate
  - b. Woman-mi totally jumps around
  - c. Lima-mi she travelled.
  - d. Not-mi in my backpack it is.
  - e. In the rainforest-mi, there are monkeys.
  - f. In Africa-mi, there are elephants.
- (35) -chá
- a. Pilar know-house-chá be. ('know-house' = school!)
  - b. There is no rain. Now year not-chá good harvest be.
- (36) -si
- a. Marya knwo-house-si be
  - b. some-si hit him
- (37) No evidential  
Pilar bread ate.

*Tibetan*

- (38) Ego
- a. I teacher ego-be
  - b. Yesterday I to his house ego-went
- (39) Direct
- a. He left-direct
  - b. He now food eat-direct
- (40) Indirect
- a. He left-indirect
  - b. today here wome tasty very indirect-ELPA

WRITING ASSIGNMENT. Due: Feb 25. Probably fairly short.

Compare Quechua, Tibetan, and English with respect to the following three scenarios:

- A. You look out the window and see pouring rain.
- B. You see people in the hallway with dripping umbrellas.
- C. You wake up and the weather report on the radio says there is pouring rain in Cambridge.

Which of the following English sentences can you use in which of the scenarios:

- (i) It's raining.
- (ii) It must be raining.
- (iii) It's raining, I guess.
- (iv) It's raining, I hear.

Based on the descriptions you have read so far (Chapter 1 of both theses), which constructions from the two languages could you use in these scenarios? Justify your answers by quoting or paraphrasing the relevant descriptions.

What relevant differences, if any, emerge between the three languages?

READING ASSIGNMENT: Faller, Chapter 2 “Evidential Hierarchies”

I myself will also be reading:

- FALLER, Martina: to appear. “The Evidential and Validational Licensing Conditions for the Cusco Quechua Enclitic *-mi*”. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics*
- FALLER, Martina: 2002. “Remarks on evidential hierarchies”. In David I. BEAVER, Luis D. Casillas MARTÍNEZ, Brady Z. CLARK & Stefan KAUFMANN, editors, *The Construction of Meaning*, CSLI, Stanford.
- DENDALE, Patrick & TASMOWSKI, Liliane: 2001. “Introduction: Evidentiality and Related Notions”. *Journal of Pragmatics* 33: 339–348
- PLUNGIAN, Vladimir A.: 2001. “The Place of Evidentiality within the Universal Grammatical Space”. *Journal of Pragmatics* 33: 349–357