

Use of evidential markers in declaratives and interrogatives

Oral presentation

Languages display obvious differences in how evidential markers are used in declaratives and interrogatives. First of all, languages may be divided into two based on whether or not evidentials may appear in both declaratives and interrogatives. Languages in which evidential markers are confined to declaratives constitute the first type (English, Finnish Estonian). The type in which evidentials appear only in interrogatives is not attested in the languages I have data for. The second main type is illustrated by languages in which evidentials are attested in both declaratives and interrogatives. This type can further be subdivided according to the nature of evidential markers in the examined constructions. First, there are languages, where there are no obvious differences in the use of evidential in declaratives and interrogatives (Kathmandu Newari, Duna). The second subtype is attested in languages, in which evidentials may appear in both constructions, but with manifest functional differences. For example, in Wutun, ego-evidentials may appear in both constructions, but in declaratives they appear with first person and in questions with second and third person. Third, there are languages like Chechen, in which the occurrence of evidential markers as such is not sensitive to the clause type, but the number of evidentials that may occur in interrogatives is lower and the nature of the markers may also be different. Finally, there are languages in which the form of the evidential markers is determined by the construction they appear in (Foe, Guambiano).

As the typology proposed above shows, the use of evidential markers in declaratives and interrogatives is clearly asymmetric; a higher number of evidential markers may occur in declaratives. The most important reason for this is probably found in the status of information source in the discussed clause types. The source of information is less relevant in interrogatives, because the focus is more clearly on the contents, and it is not important how the addressee has acquired the information. Moreover, we typically do not have access to the addressee's source of information, which renders it less natural to include an evidential marker into an interrogative. In declaratives, we do have a source of our own for the information, which we may (need to) specify. It is also worth noting that languages with and without obligatory evidentiality behave differently; evidential markers are more common in interrogatives in languages where evidentiality is an obligatory category. The status of information source is clearly different in the two language types, only languages with a highly grammaticalized evidentiality system may have evidentials also in interrogatives.

In my paper, the typology proposed above is discussed in light of cross-linguistic data. Moreover, I will also discuss the rationale behind the attested types in light of the semantics of declaratives and interrogatives. This also includes a discussion of the semantic nature of evidentials that may occur in interrogatives as well.