

Evidentials in Chinese

Zhaohui Liu

College of International Studies, Southwest University, Tiansheng Road No. 2, Beibei,
Chongqing, China

E-mail: lzhjyxy@126.com

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Abstract

Evidentiality has long been a heated topic in the field of linguistics recently. It focuses on the source of information and language user's attitude towards the reliability of information. It first aroused in the study of Indian languages. Then, linguists pay more and more attention to evidentiality. This paper would first introduce the history, definition and classification of evidentiality, and then several related notions will be detailed with comparison to evidentiality. After a brief understanding of evidentiality, this paper will further introduce some evidentials in Chinese based on Hu's model of evidentiality.

Keywords: Evidentiality, Evidential, Chinese

1. Introduction

1.1 *The History of Evidentiality*

Evidentiality is a heated study among linguists overseas and domestic in recent years, which exists in nearly all languages in different ways throughout the world. The concept of evidentiality is first proposed by Boas (1911) in his research of American Indian languages. In Kwakiutl, language users are always required to state clear the source information of their statements by adding different affixes attached to verbs (Boas, 1911). In 1947, Boas first used the word “evidential” to express the idea -- the source and certainty of knowledge. Afterwards, those researches on evidentiality occupies a place in the field of linguistics. In 1957, Roman Jakobson gave evidential the status of a label just as tense, aspect and person in grammatical system. In the spring of 1981, the first worldwide convention on evidentiality study was held in Berkeley. And later on, in 1986, a set of papers, collected on last convention, titled as *Evidentiality: the Linguistic Coding of Epistemology* was published, which can be regarded as a landmark of evidentiality study. Further on, In July 1998, evidentiality originally presented at the 6th International Pragmatics Conference in Reims. In 2001, Journal of Pragmatics published a special issue that contains altogether seven selected papers on evidentiality presented on the Conference in Reims. From then on, evidentiality as an independent topic attracts a large number of linguists.

1.2 *The Overseas and Domestic Research Status of Evidentiality*

Researches on evidentiality first aroused in abroad. Up to now, many foreign linguists have contributed to this topic. Chafe (1986) made a comparative analysis on evidentiality between English conversation and academic writing, which introduces an applied approach to evidentiality study. Inspired by him, so many linguists started from then on to explore evidentiality in other languages. He provides a theory basis for typology on evidentiality. He is also one of linguists who are in favor of the broader definition of evidentiality. They insist that evidentiality can not only express source of information, also it can indicates language users' attitude towards the source of information. Different from Chafe, Willet (1988) started from the perspective of its forms and described a well-developed system of evidential forms based on his abundant researches covering dozens of languages. However, according to his study, he confines evidentiality only to its forms, which obviously neglects the nature and function of evidential. Aikhenvald (2004) gave us an integral and systemic introduction to evidentiality, including its nature as a linguistic form, definition, classification and so on. Evidentiality (Aikhenvald, 2004) is of vital importance to study on evidentiality, which summarize and develop those past improvements on this topic and has advantages to construct a systemic theory of evidentiality.

Domestically, linguists started evidentiality study in 1990s. Professor Hu applied evidentiality theory in news and debating discourses. He also applied it into discourse study and developed Chafe's model of evidentiality. And this paper would like to introduce evidentials in Chinese under the guide of Hu's model. There are also other researches on evidentiality, such as Yan Chensong(2000) and Fang Hongmei(2006).

2. Definition of Evidentiality

Evidentiality can be defined in a narrow and a broad way. Although there are many linguists who tend to agree that indicating the source of information is rather different from indicating its reliability, there are no agreed ideas towards this. In the following parts, both narrow and broad definition will be introduced with their supporters listed.

2.1 Narrower Definition

Many linguists define evidentiality as indicating the source of information.

According to Aikhenvald (2004), “Linguistic evidentiality has nothing to do with providing proof in court or in argument, or indicating what is true and what is not, or indicating one’s belief. All evidentiality does is supply the information source. The ways in which information is acquired—by seeing, hearing, or in any other way—is its core meaning.”

Aikhenvald is a defender of narrow definition. According to him, although in some languages, some other forms indicate language user’s assessment of reliability of information, it is the peripheral meaning but not evidentiality’s core meaning. Bussmann also takes the view of narrow definition. But this view is mainly held by early researchers of evidentiality. With the development of the study on evidentiality, more and more researchers pay attention to its broad definition.

2.2 Broader Definition

On the contrary, some other linguists insist that evidentiality not only defines as indicating the source of information but also indicating language user’s assessment of reliability of information.

I need to stress that I am using the term 'evidentiality' in its broadest sense, not restricting it to the expression of 'evidence' per se. I will be discussing a range of epistemological considerations that are linguistically coded in spoken and written English. 'Evidence,' taken literally, is one of these considerations, but not the only one. What gives coherence to the set under discussion is that everything dealt with under this broad interpretation of evidentiality involves attitudes toward knowledge. The coherence is reinforced by the observation that various linguistic expressions slide across more than one of the various types within this domain. The refusal of linguistic expressions to restrict themselves to evidence in the narrow sense can be found not only in their synchronic behavior, but also diachronically, where extensions and shifts among these various epistemological considerations are by no means rare (Chafe, 1986, p.262).

Chafe insists that we should explore evidentiality in its broad sense. Chafe (1986) holds that in our actual use of language, we would always process our language with our cognition. In order to thoroughly find out what are encoded in evidentiality, it is necessary for us to study it in a broad sense.

3. Classification of Evidentiality

3.1 Willett's model of Evidentiality

Willett (1988) classifies evidentiality into direct and indirect types. His researches on evidentiality are based on 36 natural languages, which have a feature of typology. Sun (2012) further divided into four subtypes:

- (1). Experience, it indicates all evidences coming from human sensory organs.
- (2). Hearsay, it indicates all language evidences coming from other people.
- (3). Induction, it indicates evidences derived from language users' rational summarization based on those materials they already have.
- (4). Deduction, it indicates evidences derived from further reasoning based on existing assumption.

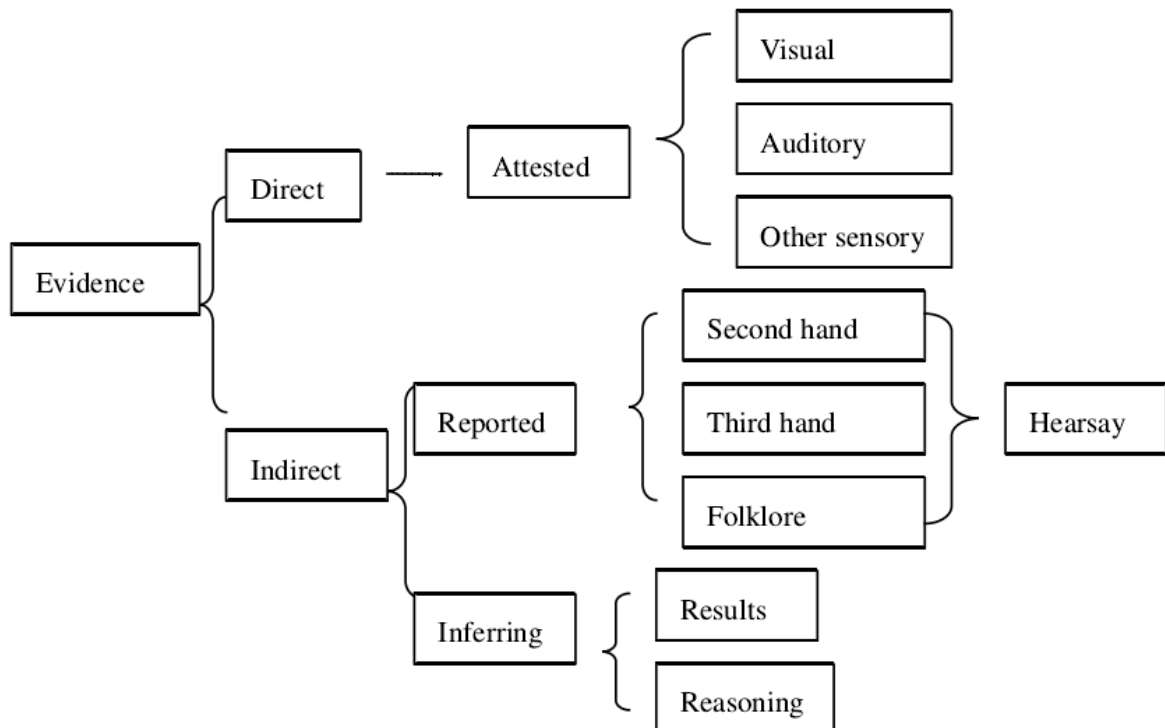


Figure 1. Willett's model of evidentiality

3.2 Chafe's Model of Evidentiality

Chafe (1986) defines evidentiality in its broad sense as illustrated in figure 2.

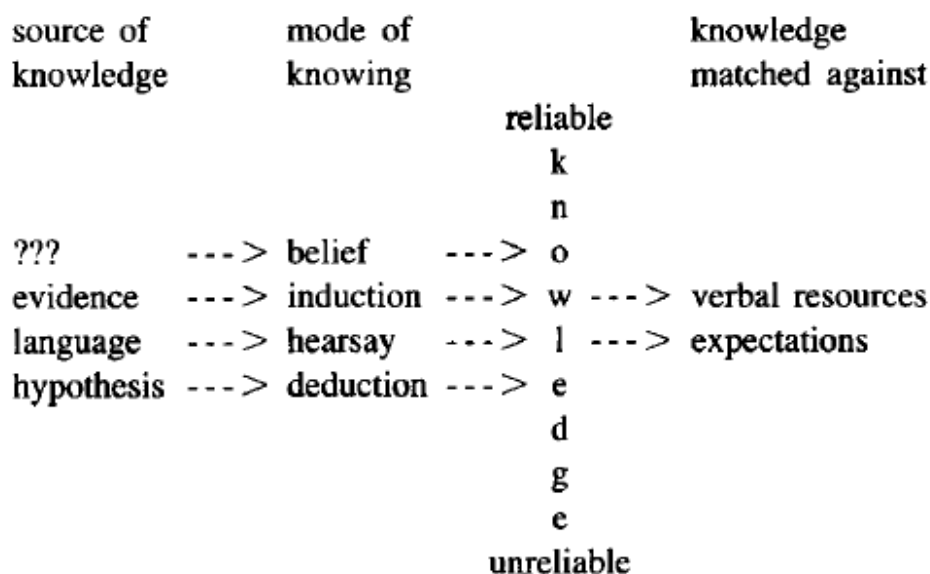


Figure 2. Chafe's model of evidentiality

In figure 2, the notion knowledge means the basic information whose status is qualified in one way or another by makers of evidentiality. The notion mode of knowing means the ways in which information is acquired (Chafe, 1986). Knowledge is considered as a continuum from the bottom as unreliable to the top as reliable. However, it does not mean that belief is always more reliable than induction, hearsay or deduction, which it depends in actual situation. Also, the information may match against verbal resources or expectations (Chafe, 1986).

3.3 Akhenvald's Model of Evidentiality

The book *Evidentiality* is of vital importance for the study on evidentiality, which is written by Aikhenvald. This book includes nearly 500 languages based on which Akhenvald have made a systemic classification of evidentiality. According to Yu (2010), Aikhenvald's model of evidentiality can be explained in figure 3:

		I 视觉	II 感觉	III 推理	IV 假定	V 听说	VI 引用
2项系统	A1	一手的		间接的 (non-firsthand)			
	A1	一手的	间接的				
	A1	一手的		间接的	不同的系统或 <无项目>		
	A4	<无项目>	非视觉的	<无项目>	报道的		
3项系统	B1	直接的		推理的	报道的		
	B2	视觉的	非视觉的	推理的	<无项目>		
	B2	视觉的	非视觉的	推理的			
	B3	视觉的	非视觉的	<无项目>	报道的		
	B4	<无项目>	非视觉的	推理的	报道的		
4项系统	C1	视觉的	非视觉的	推理的	报道的		
	C2	直接的		推理的	假定的	报道的	
	C3	直接的		推理的	报道的	引用的	
5项系统	D1	视觉的	非视觉的	推理的	假定的	报道的	

Figure 3. Chafe's model of evidentiality

In this figure, we can easily conclude that Aikhenvald classify evidentiality mainly into 6 types: visual, non-visual sensory, inferred, reported, assumed and quotative. Apart from this, different languages have different evidentiality system covering different evidentiality in type and in number.

3.4 Hu's Model of Evidentiality

Based on Chafe's model, in 1994, Hu Zhuanglin further developed Chafe's model of evidentiality. He adds culture to replace Chafe's "???" and replaces evidence with sense, which make Chafe's model more specific and accurate. This paper would mainly analyze evidentials in Chinese under Hu's model.

Source of knowledge	Mode of knowing	
Culture	Belief	Knowledge matched against
Sense	Induction	Reliability
Language	Hearsay	Verbal Resources
Hypothesis	Deduction	Expectation

Figure 4. Hu's model of evidentiality (Hu, 1994b)

4. Related Notions to Evidentiality

4.1 Evidentiality vs. Mediativity

Nowadays, evidentiality as the terminology is widely accepted by most of linguists. However, in French, there is a terminology, mediativity, which is to some extent similar to evidentiality and always confuses beginners who pay attention to this field. Actually, the two terms do have some similarities. Before the term evidentiality is introduced to the French, those French

scholars use term mediativity to indicate almost the same meaning as evidentiality. As a result, some French linguists always prefer mediativity to evidentiality. Nevertheless, there are differences between the two terms.

The semantic domain of mediativity is related to, but not fully identical to, that of evidentiality. The difference is prefigured by the root elements of the respective terms. Instead of focusing on the kind of evidence at the speaker's disposal, the term mediativity focuses on the special character of utterances mediated by references to the evidence, i.e., on distances between speakers and what they say. As will be seen below, this has consequences for the division of the general category into subcategories. In what follows, we will use evidentiality/mediativity to refer to the semantic domain and evidential~mediative to refer to linguistic markers by which it is manifested (Dendale & Tasmowski, 2001, p.341)

4.2 Evidentiality vs. Mirativity

Mirativity is always considered as an extension of evidentials. However, this view is not definitely right. Mirativity covers speaker's 'unprepared mind', unexpected new information, and concomitant surprise (Aikhenvald, 2004). Some scholars hold that sometimes mirativity can indicate non- firsthand information carried by evidentials. However, according to Aikhenvald (2004), although there are cases when evidentiality has mirativity extensions, mirative meanings do not always have to be expressed through evidentials. In other word, mirative can be classified as an independent grammatical category, which may have overlapping meaning with evidentials but not the same thing.

4.3 Evidentiality vs. Epistemic Modality

Whether or not evidentiality can be included into epistemic modality has long been a troublesome question to be solved. According to Dendale & Tasmowsk (2001), they clear their relationship into three types.

Three relations between the notion of evidentiality and modality can be found in modern studies (Dendale & Tasmowsk, 2001):

- (1). Disjunction, where the two terms are conceptually distinguished from each other.
- (2). Inclusion, where one is regarded as falling within the semantic scope of the other.
- (3). Overlap, where they have intersect meanings.

5. Evidentials in Chinese

5.1 Two General Types of Evidentials

As being labeled as a grammatical form, evidentiality is always called evidentials or evidential markers by scholars. Typically, it is almostly accepted by everyone that there are two types of form that can indicate evidentials.

One type of form is called morphological markers or morphological evidentials. It means that some languages in the world always indicate the source of information by adding affixes to certain type of words. For example, in Makah (Jacobson, 1986):

The following are forms with evidential suffixes:

- (1) wiki-caxakpi-d
'It looks like bad weather.' (with an inference from physical evidence)
- (2) wiki-caxakqcuPi
'It sounds like bad weather.' (on the evidence of hearing)
- (3) wiki-'caxakwa-d
'I'm told there's bad weather.' (the quotative)
- (4) wiki-caxakitwa-d
'I'm told it was bad weather.' (the corresponding past tense form)

As we can see in the above example, in Makah, people add suffixes to express the source of information. Apart from Makah, languages like Japanese, Kwakiutl are all this type.

The other type is called lexical markers or lexical evidentials. It means that some languages use verbs, adjectives, adverbs and modal verbs to indicate the source of information. For example,

- (5) I saw Tom playing soccer
- (6) Someone said that Tom played soccer.
- (7) I therefore conclude that Tom played soccer.

By observing the example, we can see that people use words saw, said and conclude to respectively express the source of information. Languages like English, Chinese belong to this type.

In this chapter, this paper will mainly focus on evidentials in Chinese. How and in what specific forms evidentials are expressed in Chinese.

5.2 Evidential Markers in Chinese

Hu Zhuanglin (1994) presents that the way used in analyzing evidentiality in English can also be used in Chinese. So in this part, this paper would introduce some evidential markers in Chinese based on that of previous researches in English.

Chinese evidentials belong to the type of lexical evidentials. In Chinese, we have verbs, modal auxiliaries, adverbs and nouns, which can indicate the source of meaning. In the following section, we will explain them respectively based on the model of Aikhenvald.

5.2.1 Verbs

Those verbs that can be used to indicate evidentiality are always verbs of cognition and perlocutionary verbs. Verbs of cognition like 听见, 认为, 感到, 推测, 以为, 揣测; perlocutionary verbs like 通知, 嘱咐, 指出, 声明, 发誓, for example (Zhu, 2006),

- (8) 我看见王老师从教室里出去了。
- (9) 我听见他们说他们要去打篮球。
- (10) 据有关部门透露, 这件事不归他们负责。

According to Hu's model, we boldly draw a conclusion that the verbs of cognition mainly express the source of information coming from the ways of sense and culture. And the perlocutionary verbs mainly express the source of information coming from the way of language.

5.2.2 Auxiliary Words

5.2.2.1 Modal Verbs

Modal verbs like 会, 应该 can express the idea of evidentiality. For example,

- (11) 他会来的。
- (12) 他应该就是王老师。

In these examples, we can see that 会, 应该 can express the reliability of information like words *maybe, should* in English.

5.2.2.2 Modal Particles

In linguistics, modal particles are always uninflected words, and are a type of grammatical particle. Their function is that of reflecting the mood or attitude of the speaker or narrator, in that they are not reflexive but change the mood of the verb. They are often used to indicate how the speaker thinks that the content of the sentence relates to the participants' common knowledge (wikipedia). Based on this definition, we can relate modal particles to evidentiality in its broad sense. For example, the modal particle 吧 can to some extent indicate people's knowledge of information and their attitude towards information (Ye, 2008).

- (13) 他就是那个人吧。
- (14) 你什么时候有空? --明天吧。

By observing the two examples, we know that the word 吧 express the idea of uncertainty and guess of information. On the level of evidentiality's broad sense, modal particles can to some extent indicate the meaning of evidentials.

5.3 Modal Adverbs

In Chinese, we have a lot of modal adverbs like 一定, 绝对, 肯定, 必须, which can indicate the meaning of evidentials. For example,

- (15) 他一定就是王老师。
- (16) 他绝对去了学校。

From these examples, 一定, 绝对 indicate that language users have a high credibility source towards information.

5.4 Nouns

Nouns like 可能 has the same function as foresaid modal verbs. For example,

- (17) 有这个可能。

In Chinese, we have 可能, and in English, we have possibility, both two words can express that language users are not so certain of what they said. According to Chafe, in evidentiality's broad sense, we can boldly conclude that nouns can function as evidentials.

6. Conclusion

The research on evidentiality has a very long history. In the field of linguistics, a general idea of its basic concepts has formed. Overseas, scholars have done so many researches on evidentiality with the approach of typology and applied linguistics. Based on those researches, we have shaped a general and comparatively systemic understanding towards evidentiality. However, there are still few researches which analyze evidentials with the approach of cognitive linguistics. Domestically, linguists prefer to follow predecessors' achievements, as a result, they pay more attention to evidentiality study on news, academic writings, or they tend to analyze evidential's function. However, we seldom have papers analyze evidentiality on other subjects or under other circumstance. We also seldom have papers which apply the theory of cognitive linguistics to explain evidentiality and we pay less attention to comparative analysis on evidentiality between English and Chinese. In a word, we should work more diligently on this topic.

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