

Lexical Means of Expressing Indirect Evidentiality in English – Speech Verbs and Information Verbs

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Abstract

Current research into indirect evidentiality aims to identify means of expressing it. Theoretical and methodological basis of the research are fundamental assumptions of modern linguistic knowledge in indirect evidentiality theory. On studying it we first distinguish between direct and indirect evidentiality in the English language. In this paper, analyzing indirect evidentiality we single out 1) inferential; 2) presumptive; 3) reporting subcategories. The research witnesses that information and speech verbs are the means of expressing the category of indirect evidentiality. Further the paper focuses on identifying which of the speech verbs are used most frequently to express indirect evidentiality. To achieve this aim we set the following tasks: 1) to study the theory and methodology of the category of evidentiality; 3) to consider means of expressing the category of indirect evidentiality; 4) analyzing the empirical material to delve into the character of utilizing basic information and speech verbs in English utterances.

Key words: The category of evidentiality, Information verbs, Speech verbs, Inferential subcategory, Presumptive subcategory, Reporting subcategory

INTRODUCTION

Authorization, as well as other cases of indicating information sources, or lack of it are considered to be special cases of evidentiality. The category of evidentiality may include any information about the source of the statement as with the sign (+) to indicate its presence, and with the sign (-) – its absence or ambiguity, uncertainty. The beginning of the new century saw growing interest in evidentiality, which resulted in the increased number of publications dealing with this problem in different languages of the world. A separate issue of Journal of Pragmatics was devoted to the category of evidentiality and its links with grammatical categories. Material on the history of study and the main problems of evidentiality is presented in the introduction [4, 342]. V.A. Plungyan [10] proposed his own typology

of evidential systems, including direct, reflected and mediated ways of perceiving information. J. Lazard presented a description of the grammaticalization of evidentiality in the languages of South Eastern Europe and Central Asia [7].

According to V.A. Plungyan, two works can be considered as the most significant: a collection by A. Aikhenvald and R. Dixon [3] and a monograph by Aikhenvald [2]. The latter should be considered as the most complete guide to the history of the study of evidentiality and its semantics. These two works make up the major part of the theoretical basis of this article.

The collection “Studies in Evidentiality” (“Studies in the field of evidentiality”) by A. Aikhenvald [3] and R. Dixon [3] opens with the article by Aikhenvald “Evidentiality in a typological perspective” [1], where a comprehensive approach to evidentiality is presented. The connection between grammatical evidentiality and the basic principles of human communication became the subject of a study of the last article in this collection “Evidentiality: summing up, questions and perspectives” by B. Joseph [6]. He proposed a model of a diffuse category of evidentiality that can easily penetrate into other languages, as well as

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the existence of morphological evidentiality in the Indo-European proto-language.

The purpose of A. Aikhenvald's monograph "Evidentiality" [2] is to present a functional typological review on evidential systems and strategies in the world's languages. A. Aikhenvald distinguishes semantic features relevant for the typology of evidentiality values: visual, sensor, inference, hearsay and quotative. The proposed semantic parameters of evidentiality, in her opinion, are unevenly represented in languages and reflect their features. Expression of evidential values serves to distinguish a full-fledged evidential system or an emerging evidential strategy. Electronic "Encyclopedia of language and linguistics" (Encyclopedia of language and linguistics, Encyclopedia 2006) and in the article by A. Aikhenvald [2] became significant contribution to the study of the category of evidentiality.

Thus, thorough study of the theoretical literature in foreign linguistics allows us to draw the following conclusions: the central issues of studies are morphological and lexical means expressing evidentiality, especially if we take into consideration modal verbs jointly realizing epistemic modality and evidentiality.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The material of this article is based on examples from British National Corpus (BNC), also from different informational websites, periodicals and fiction works.

Analyzing the empirical material concerning the meaning and functions of linguistic units various linguistic methods were applied: the methods of component analysis, method of semantic analysis, discourse analysis and structural grammatical method. Logical analysis was utilized to distinguish between different subcategories of indirect evidentiality. Describing the process of the research we applied descriptive method. Utilizing the method of statistical analysis we found out the most and the least frequent verbs in expressing the analyzed category.

DISCUSSION

Contemporary linguistics singles out "first-hand narration" or direct evidentiality, a message from the witness of the event, and "reporting from second hand" or indirect evidentiality. Indirect evidentiality means non-personal access to information and implies that the speaker's knowledge was obtained by him from another person or persons (based on retelling other people's

words). The source of the statement being retold can be either known or unknown. The main way to obtain information is a reporter, describing the mediated information that came to the speaker from someone (various options for accessing the situation on the basis of other people's words). The central category of the functional semantic field of indirect evidentiality is reporting category expressing indirect, non-personal access to information, namely the reporter's access to information. The message of a person who himself was not a witness of the event, and the speaker is not the source of information.

Inferentiality is a subcategory of indirect evidentiality, where the utterance is based on logical inference. An indirect, personal, inferential way of access to information implies that the speaker receives information himself, without others' help, but the information is not "direct," since the speaker does not directly observe the situation. For example, the suggestion of the *cat has eaten a sausage* can be pronounced by the speaker if he does not see the sausages on the table, but sees a licking cat. Such values are called inferential and suggest logical conclusions of the speaker based on observed results. The speaker first observes certain phenomenon in a particular situation, and then thinks about things that could cause it, which turns out to be a reported fact. The situation is reinstated due to logical conclusions and has hypothetical nature.

Indirect personal presumptive way of access to information is realized in statements where the speaker declares a situation on the basis of certain cause-effect relations. For example, in the context *the berries have already ripened by this time*, the assertion about *the ripeness of berries* appeals not to observation, but to general patterns of the world organization.

The difference between the inferential and presumptive subcategories can be illustrated by the following example. The statement of *my neighbor is already at home* can imply two interpretations: with a presumptive indicator - *it's 8 o'clock, my neighbor must be at home* (if the speaker knows that the neighbor is coming home at this time) and with the inferential indicator - *there is a light in the window. My neighbor is already at home* (if the speaker observes the situation, which he interprets as evidence in favor of his statement). Indirect, personal ways of obtaining information are inferential and presumptive, they belong to the periphery of indirect evidentiality.

Scrutinizing the theoretical work on the topic and on the basis of our logical analysis of the empirical material we conclude that the functional-semantic field of evidentiality

has two cores: 1) perceptivity (direct evidentiality) with peripheral zones of participancy and sensations; 2) indirect evidentiality with peripheral zones of presumption and inference.

In this work we deal with indirect evidentiality; here is an utterance exemplifying it: today it will rain. If we alter it to make the weatherman has told it's going to rain today we will have indirect reporting evidentiality, peripheral zone. Changing the utterance to make There are clouds on the sky, it must rain today, we will have indirect inferential evidentiality. The variant of the utterance The end of October. It's raining time. I think it will rain today exemplifies indirect presumptive evidentiality.

RESULTS

As indirect reporting evidentiality has reporting verbs as its inherent part, it is worth to dwell upon the semantics of verbs representing indirect reporting category. First, one should distinguish between information verbs and speech verbs. Verbs of the Verbadicendi or speech verbs class are one of those groups that have undergone a multiple analysis in linguistics.

According to the functional-cognitive concept, speech activity is defined as one of the most important types of human activity, the basis of which is the macro-concept of "talking", assuming various aspects of actualization of the general concept in the process of speech activity. This macroconcept conveys a multidimensional content, represented by the inner vocabulary of a person in the form of specific blocks of language elements.

The most important linguistic functions are: communicative, informative, cognitive, nominative, emotionally appraising, interpreting. Information verbs perform basic informative function. The necessity of expressing rational thinking and communicating information about the results determines the corresponding function, which can be called an informative function. The verbs of information semantics represent a vast and heterogeneous class of vocabulary. In total, 44 units are considered to perform informative function in the English language.

Basic information verbs are: *to inform, to announce, to declare, to claim, to report, to expound, to state, to articulate*, etc., e.g.:

But something informed him that they had had some trouble and they had got rid of it (BNC). *The delegates informed me about what they had discussed beforehand* (BNC). *Researchers reported that the greater the wax of moths, the greater the frequency of the sensations,*

the higher the frequency, the more the dolphins, known for their keen sense of hearing (BNC).

In English, we can find analytical structures denoting "to gain knowledge about something, to receive news" that have a verb, a nominal component and a postposition, characterized by a narrow sphere of use. The nominal component in these expressions has lost its semantic meaning or grammaticalized [8]. "Grammaticalization is a diachronic change, in which parts of the constructional schema are involved in a relationship of great dependence" [5, 5]. The expression *get a line on* is used by police or journalists when referring to "hot" information received secretly, e.g.:

If you want to get a line on how she feels, she gave me a letter to give you. Here it is (BNC).

One more expression that should be mentioned here is *get wind of*. The expression characterizes the receipt of preliminary information about something hitherto unknown or clues about something that should happen, e.g.:

They retreated again, when they got wind that troops were assembling (BNC).

Thus, in English, there are some set-expressions functioning as information verbs.

The lexical representation of the reporting category by information verbs is characteristic of journalistic style. Searching examples from electronic sources, works of fiction, teaching aids and scientific publications, we found out that the quantitative preponderance is observed in newspaper publications, in particular, information notes. The latter serves to influence people through the media and is characterized by the presence of socio-political vocabulary, logic, emotionality, evaluation, recruitment. The information in such kind of texts is intended not for a limited number of specialists, but for the whole society. The main functions of the journalistic style are: 1) informative function – to inform people in the shortest possible time about the latest news; 2) effective function – to influence people's opinions.

Basic speech verbs realize the category of reporting, which is explained by a wide range of their meanings and semantic neutrality. The most frequent verbs *to say, to tell* are neutral markers of the speech-act. The Merriam-Webster dictionary gives the following main meanings of the verb *to say*: 1) to express in words, to state as opinion or belief; 2) utter, pronounce; 3) indicate, show, to give expression 4) suppose, assume [9]. According to the

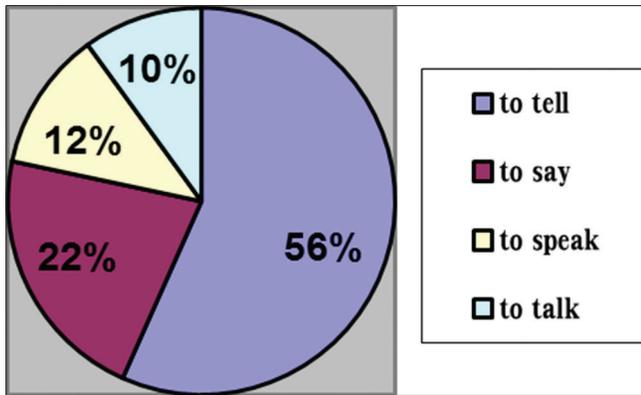


Figure 1: Frequency diagrams of verbs of speech

same dictionary, the main meanings of the verb *to tell* are as follows: 1) to give utterance to; 2) to express in words; 3) to give information to; 4) order; 5) to find out by observing [9].

Basic meaning of these verbs is “to use, to master oral speech” with an additional tinge “to speak any language”. The second interpretation - “to express in the oral speech any thoughts, opinions, to report facts, etc., to say anything” – fully includes the first. The third option corresponds to the importance of talking, talking about someone, discussing something.

Basic verbs of speech in English are: *to say, to tell, to speak, to talk, to communicate*

To obtain statistical data about expressing reporting category by basic speech verbs about 60 sentences were selected and analyzed. As the result, the following frequency rating of the aforementioned verbs in this function was made: the verb *to say* is used in 34 sentences (56%), *to tell* – in 13 (22%), *to speak* – in 7 (12%), *to talk* – in 6 (10%). Thus, the verb *to say* proves to be the most frequent.

Here are some examples including the verb *to say*: *The father, IlyaItskov, said through an interpreter in a phone, that he was a perfectionist who would not stop trying to learn a subject of English, or windsurfing, until he mastered it* (BNC). *The Washington Post said that the knock against Clinton is that he is shifty* (BNC).

The verb *to say*, basic meanings of which were mentioned above, serves to transmit small messages and is usually used in any type of proposals to provide information (advice, request), mainly from a third party. Most often, the verb *to say* does not require an object that points to the interlocutor, although its presence is permissible; the object is preceded by the prefix *to*, e.g.:

Mr. HERTZ (Denmark), referring to the legal framework of the fight against terrorism, said that the first set of provisions had

been adopted. (BNC). *Nobuo Tanaka, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency, and a member of The Global Energy Prize International Award Committee says at the moment the agency is developing a ‘new nuclear scenario’, which will be ready by November 2012* (BNC). *The police, on the strength of what he said to Michaelis, that he had a way of finding out, supposed that he spent that time going from garage to garage, inquiring for a yellow car* (BNC).

The verbs *to talk, to speak* are less frequent in implementing the reporting category, e.g.:

Supposing she, too, wrote him and told him that she knew all that she would have to do with him (BNC). *Carl Zimmer talks about the life cycle and evolutionary adaptations of the insect* (BNC). *ELEC statistics are representative of the industry as a whole and speak for themselves. 40 % of our generating capacity is accounted for the lignite and coal, 25% by gas and 20% is attributable to nuclear energy* (BNC).

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, basic speech verbs implementing the reporting category and expressing the oral information transmission in English utterance are *to say* and *to tell*. The results obtained in the practical part of our research are controversial – there is a discrepancy between the stated basic verbs of reporting category *to inform, to report* and their functioning – they are not dominant and their frequency compared with speech verbs is lower. Our explanations of this phenomenon are as follows: 1) this discrepancy indicates that the reporting category is limited by the framework of indirect speech, which is typical for a given microfield of indirect evidentiality – the reporting category; 2) the use of information verbs is characteristic of journalistic style; 3) in the literature, speech verbs function along with other means of realizing the category of reporting, for example, morphological and lexical, non-verbal.

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