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by Peter Grund

2012

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Grund, Peter. 2012. "The Nature of Knowledge: Evidence and Evidentiality in the Witness Depositions from the Salem Witch Trials." *American Speech* 87(1): 7–38.

Published version: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/00031283-1599941>

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The Nature of Knowledge: Evidence and Evidentiality in the Witness Depositions from the Salem Witch Trials

PETER J. GRUND

University of Kansas

Abstract: This article explores evidentiality (or the linguistic marking of source of information), a topic that has received little attention in studies on the history of English. Using witness depositions from the witch trials in Salem, MA, in 1692–1693 as material, the article reveals that a number of linguistic features are used to indicate source of information, especially verb phrases (e.g. *see, hear, tell*) and prepositional phrases (e.g. *to my knowledge, in my sight*). It also shows that direct sensory experience and reports are the most common semantic categories of evidentiality in the documents, while inference and assumption are relatively uncommon. I argue that the depositions use evidential marking in different situations to fulfill a variety of pragmatic functions. For example, the witnesses refer to direct experience (seeing) of the affliction by the apparitions of alleged witches to bring greater credibility to allegations that could usually not be substantiated. More generally, the article demonstrates how concepts such as discourse community, setting, and pragmatic concerns, which have not been systematically considered in studies on early English in North America, are crucial factors for our understanding of the use of English in the period.

Introduction

For speakers of some languages, marking evidentiality, that is, where the information that they are reporting on comes from, can be of utmost importance.¹ Speakers of Aymara, a language of South America, for example, may be “branded as arrogant liars” unless they signal with overt linguistic cues whether their statement is based on sensory evidence, on hearsay, or on inference (Aikhenvald 2004, 18, 335). This is in stark contrast to English. Although English has the resources to mark evidentiality, they are far from obligatory. In fact, most of the time, language users only indicate the source of information in a vague manner, leave it to be inferred from the context of the statement, or give no clues at all (cf. Palmer 1986, 85). If a language user made a statement as in (1a),

(1a) The witch was in the house.

the formulation would not reveal how the user came to know that the witch was in the house: he/she might have seen the witch, someone else might have told him/her, or perhaps he/she is inferring that the witch is in the house on the basis of some unstated evidence. However, by lexical or syntactic means, a language user could make the source of her/his information readily available to the addressee, as in (1b)–(1e):

(1b) I saw that the witch was in the house. (visual perception)

(1c) I heard that the witch was in the house. (auditory perception or report)

(1d) He told me that the witch was in the house. (report)

(1e) The witch must be in the house. (inference)

Until very recently, researchers have paid little attention to the choices made by users of English in terms of *whether* to mark the source of their information and, if so, *how* to mark that source. This is mainly because scholars who are interested in evidentiality have focused on languages that have more or less obligatory systems where the marking is exclusively or primarily morphological rather than lexical (see esp. Aikhenvald and Dixon 2003; Aikhenvald 2004; Bednarek 2006, 636–37, 652). However, a few studies on Present-Day English are beginning to show that users have a variety of means to mark evidentiality and that they employ those means for a number of pragmatic and discourse-related purposes (see Pomerantz 1984; Chafe 1986; Stygall 1994; Fox 2001; Hyland 2005; Bednarek 2006; Clift 2006; Garretson and Ädel 2008; Aijmer 2009; Whitt 2010). The few historical studies that exist, on the other hand, have focused on the development and changes of evidential meaning primarily in a limited number of verbs

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(see e.g. Traugott 1989; Gisborne and Holmes 2007; Whitt 2010). Many aspects of evidentiality in English thus remain unexplored, not least the markers of evidentiality (or evidentials) and their pragmatic functions in historical periods.

The aim of this article is to provide a historical study of evidentiality marking by investigating the full range of markers that were used at one particular point, in a particular historical setting. Using the witness depositions from the witch trials in Salem, MA, in 1692–1693, I will chart what devices were employed by the witnesses and recorders of their testimony to mark the source of information, as regards both construction (e.g. verb, adverb, prepositional phrase) and semantic category (Sensory, Inference, Assumption, Quotative). Since the Salem depositions frequently present challenges for linguistic studies and since many of the features that are discussed in this study have not been dealt with (at least not fully) from an evidentiality perspective, I will discuss methodological and classification difficulties in some detail. A prominent part of the study is also the exploration of how the witnesses use evidentials in different situations to fulfill a variety of pragmatic functions, such as indicating authority, certainty, or uncertainty, and signaling distance or emphasis. These functions appear to be very closely connected to the socio-historical and legal context of the Salem witch trials. Looking to these extralinguistic, contextual factors for explanations, my study is situated within what has recently been termed pragmaphilology. This aspect of the burgeoning field of historical pragmatics focuses on synchronic-historical usage of language (that is, language use at one point in history) and a contextualization of the usage within a particular socio-historical setting (Jacobs and Jucker 1995, 11–13; Taavitsainen and Jucker 2010, 12). This study thus not only contributes to our knowledge of the nature and frequency of evidentiality marking historically; it also demonstrates more generally how concepts such as discourse community, setting, and pragmatic

concerns, which have not been systematically considered in studies on early English in North America, are crucial factors for our understanding of the use of English in the period.²

Evidentiality: Definition and Classification Scheme

Virtually ever since evidentiality became a topic of intense study among linguists in the early 1980s, the concept has been variously defined and the definition hotly contested. The definitions fall into two major categories, one narrow and one broad, as Bednarek (2006, 636–37) points out (see also Willett 1988; de Haan 1999; for a slightly different characterization, see Dendale and Tasmowski 2001, 341–42). Studies taking a narrow approach limit their field to expressions that indicate the source of information (e.g. sensory evidence, inference, and reported information). This approach is particularly common among language typology scholars, who, as remarked above, primarily see evidentiality as a morphological category, where the nature of the source is signaled through the use of specific inflections (see e.g. the contributions in Aikhenvald and Dixon 2003). Aikhenvald (2004, 10) even argues that English does not possess the category of evidentiality at all, since language users have to resort to lexical strategies to mark evidentiality. Countering Aikhenvald's (2004) claim that evidentiality resides in morphology alone, Whitt (2010) is one of the very few studies of evidentiality in English to adopt a clearly "narrow" approach, although some studies on quotatives or reported speech in particular may at least start out from this perspective (Fox 2001; Hyland 2005; Garretson and Ädel 2008; cf. also Fennell 2011).

The broader definition of evidentiality, on the other hand, covers *both* source of information *and* the evaluation of the reliability and probability of the information. In other words, evidentiality is regarded as the same as, part of, or intersecting with what is often referred

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to as epistemic modality (see esp. Willett 1988, 52–56; de Haan 1999, 85–87; see also Palmer 1986, 51–54, 69–70). This merger or overlap is frequently found in studies or discussions of English, such as, among others, Chafe (1986), Biber and Finegan (1988; 1989), Stygall (1994), Palander-Collin (1999), Taavitsainen (2001), and Precht (2003). In fact, in studies adopting this approach, source of information usually takes a back seat to or is excluded completely in favor of epistemic meanings or features (esp. modal auxiliaries). Frequently, then, evidentiality is used simply as an alternative term for epistemic modality. Even though some typology scholars also suggest that evidentials may have epistemic meanings or extensions, they emphasize the primacy of the source marking, showing that evidentials do not always have epistemic meanings, or that, in some languages, evidentials never have epistemic extensions (see e.g. Aikhenvald 2004, 6–7).

The starting point of this study is the narrower approach since the main goal is to investigate what linguistic resources are used to mark the source of information and what type of source is indicated. At the same time, I will consider the possible epistemic meanings that an evidential may have in a particular context. Indeed, it will become clear that the reason for marking the source often appears to be pragmatically conditioned, that is, evidentials may for example be used to emphasize or downplay the reliability of the evidence given in certain contexts. The overlap between evidentiality and epistemic modality is thus clear in terms of the Salem material considered here. However, it should be underscored that this is not a study of the full range or system of epistemic marking, which would require considering a number of features and constructions that do not mark source, including most of the modal auxiliaries (e.g. *may*, *might*), adverbs such as *certainly*, and adjectives such as *sure*. These clearly require a separate study, which together with this study of evidentials and their possible epistemic functions could

help piece together a larger picture of speaker stance or speaker evaluation in the Salem depositions (cf. Biber 2004).

In addition to the problems of definition, there is not complete consensus about the categories of evidentiality, although the schemes that have been suggested clearly overlap (e.g. Chafe 1986, 263–69; Willett 1988, 56–57; Aikhenvald 2004, 63–64; Bednarek 2006, 644). I will adopt a modified version of Aikhenvald's semantically-based taxonomy that is shown below and illustrated with examples from the Salem material. I will return to the identification of evidentials in the next section.

- I) **Sensory**: information based on the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.

I saw this willard suckle the Apparition of two black piggs on his breasts (*RSWH*, no. 179)

- II) **Inference**: information based on an inference from visual or tangible evidence or result.

my son Daniel comeinge and vnderstanding I was go<i>nge with him to Boston. and. seemed to be much troubled that I would go with the sayd Willard (*RSWH*, no. 270)

- III) **Assumption**: information based on cognitive processes such as logical reasoning, assumption, etc.

I beleue many Innocent persons haue been accused, & Imprisoned, y^c Conceit of Spectre
Evidence as an infallible mark did too far prevaile with us (*RSWH*, no. 745)

IV) **Quotative**: information based on a report *with* or *without* a specific source.

the Rumer went that the sd martin had a brokn head at y^t time but the deponent cannot
speake to that vpon his owne knowlig (*RSWH*, no. 139; without specific source)

[...] their young daughter who was viseted with strang fitts & in her fitts (as her father &
mother affirmed) did mention goodwife How the wife of James How Junior of Ipswich
(*RSWH*, no. 284; with specific source)

Since Aikhenvald developed her taxonomy on the basis of present-day languages in which evidentiality is primarily encoded morphologically, some categories required modification to be more suitable for my English historical material. I merged Aikhenvald's categories of Visual and Non-visual Sensory into one category since English does not make the kind of significant distinctions that prompted Aikhenvald to make the initial separation. As I will demonstrate later, however, separation of evidential markers according to the five senses does yield some striking results. Aikhenvald (2004, 63) does not provide an exhaustive list of aspects covered by the category of Assumption, but says that it "may include logical reasoning, assumption, or simply general knowledge." I have incorporated markers of a number of cognitive processes that clearly point to the deponent's mental faculties as the source of information, including belief, remembrance, understanding, and opinion. Finally, Aikhenvald (2004, 64) has two categories for information based on reports: "Hearsay" for reports without a source, and "Quotative" for reports

with a source. Although the two do exhibit differing patterns in the Salem material (as we shall see), I prefer the term Quotative for both categories (with subdivision into *with specific source* and *without specific source*). This is to avoid confusion since the concept of "hearsay" in a legal sense, which may in fact cover both of Aikhenvald's categories, will be of importance in this study.

Material and Data Collection

My material consists of 389 witness depositions from the Salem witch trials, taken from the recent edition of the Salem documents, *RSWH*.³ The depositions represent one or more deponents' retelling of their past experiences (what they did, saw, heard, etc.) pertaining to the case of an alleged witch.⁴ The origin and transmission of these depositions must be carefully considered in linguistic studies since these aspects of the documents may influence the linguistic features in the texts. In accordance with a Massachusetts Bay Colony law from 1650 (Shurtleff 1854, 211), depositions were usually not taken down in court. Instead, they were recorded in the home of the deponent, of a relative, or elsewhere. They were then filed with the clerk of the court, and if the deposition was admitted into evidence, the deponent would be called to swear to the testimony in court after it had been read out (for further discussion, see Grund 2007a, 4–5, 12–14; Grund et al. 2009; Grund forthcoming). What is significant about this procedure for the purposes of this study is that the deposition could be written down by a number of different people: by the deponent himself or even possibly herself, or by a neighbor, relative, or hired writer; there was no requirement that the recorder be a clerk of the court. To what extent a recorder (if other than the deponent him- or herself) influenced the language recorded is unknown, but there are indications that the impact could be substantial (see e.g. Grund 2007b;

Grund forthcoming; Grund and Walker 2011, 47–56).⁵ The usage of the evidentials should thus not necessarily be taken to be that of the deponent; rather, it is more useful to see it as a feature of the text, in many cases co-produced by the deponent and the recorder. The usage can thus be seen as the positioning of the *evidence* in terms of giving the source for the information, and not necessarily the positioning of the deponent, although the two are of course closely related (cf. the discussion of *credibly* in Fennell 2011, 28).

The evidentials were collected from the material through what Bednarek (2006, 638–39) has termed a “text-driven approach.” Since I was interested in seeing how the category of evidentiality was realized linguistically in the documents, I did not run automatic searches for a number of predetermined lexical or morphological forms or syntactic structures. Instead, the collection was done manually, and I included all forms and constructions that appeared to signal source of information. The approach was thus function-based rather than form-based.⁶

As evidential markers are not morphological but lexical or syntactic in English, the identification is not always straightforward. A particular problem is that evidentiality may be just one of many functions/meanings of a lexical item or construction (see e.g. Whitt 2010, 23–27). My identification is thus primarily based on semantics and context of the statement in the text. I was guided by the question “What source is provided for the statement/proposition/claim?” or “How does the deponent know what he/she claims to know?”

Even with this fairly straightforward approach, some uses required special treatment. Following Whitt (2010, 79), I do not include statements where the evidential markers are negated, such as in (2).

(2) I neuar herd hur refil [= revile] eny parson that heth akusid hur with wichcraft (*RSWH*, no. 317).

Technically, in this and similar examples, it is the *lack* of source rather than the existence of a source that is indicated. Interestingly, signaling the absence of a source is particularly common in depositions that provide support for an alleged witch, where the deponent seems to attempt to refute a particular (explicit or implicit) accusation against the person in question. The implications of this strategy would be worth a special study, which is not within the scope of this article.

Furthermore, I did not include examples such as *appeared* in (3).

(3) There apeared a little blackheard [= black-haired] man to me in blackish aparill (*RSWH*, no. 122).

Although *appear* indirectly indicates visual experience, it does not point to a conscious strategy of providing a source for a statement. It also signals the action of appearance, rather than simple perception. This treatment agrees with that of Gisborne and Holmes (2007, 15–16), who do not consider this kind of usage evidential. (See also the discussion of Sensory evidentials.)

The final and most problematic area of identification and classification involves discourse layers and Quotative markers. One of the defining features of depositions is that they can incorporate several discourse layers. While most depositions primarily consist of the deponent's narrative, sometimes the deponent reports on discussions that he or she has overheard, been told about, or participated in. A typical example is given in (4).

(4) The deposition of James Kettle aged twenty seven: years or there about testyfieth & saith that I was att Docter Grigs his hous on the tenth of this instant may & there saw Elizebeth Hubbard in severall Fitts: and after her ffits ware over she told me that she saw my too Childdren Laying before her & that thay cryd for vengance & that Sarah Bishop bid her Look on them & said that she kiled them (*RSWH*, no. 190)

Of particular significance here is that there are several levels of evidentials. The top level, which is common to all depositions, is the indication that all the information comes from what the deponent says: "testyfieth & saith," a Quotative phrase. Within that report, there are evidentials that were purportedly used by James Kettle to mark his source of information (such as "there *saw...*"), and those ascribed to Elizabeth Hubbard in her retelling of her experiences (such as "she *saw...*" and "*said that...*" referring to what Sarah Bishop is supposed to have told Hubbard). In this study, I will concentrate on the evidentials purportedly used by the deponent and exclude the embedded uses as well as the initial reporting phrase. The initial phrase is simply part of the formulaic framing of the deposition, and does not give much insight into the forms and functions of evidentials. The embedded evidentials, on the other hand, are difficult to analyze in terms of possible pragmatic functions, since the full textual context of the reported usage is rarely provided and the statements are frequently paraphrased or truncated. The interpretation of Quotatives also involves a broader conceptualization of what *information* actually is, especially within the trial context. I will return to this issue in the Quotative section.

Finally, it should be underscored that this is not a full variational study. While I collected all realizations of evidentiality, I did not code contexts where evidentiality marking did not occur

but could potentially do so. In order to determine whether a statement could potentially have been marked, I would have been forced to make grammatical and pragmatic judgments about seventeenth-century English that would inevitably be anachronistic and subjective. This study thus concentrates on the nature of the existing marking and the context and possible motivations for that marking. I will, however, make some limited, qualitative comparisons with contexts where no marking occurs.

Evidentials in the Depositions from the Salem Witch Trials

The Salem depositions reveal a number of different evidentials, which are used to mark all four semantic categories outlined previously (Sensory, Inference, Assumption, and Quotative). The overall frequency (shown in Table 1) indicates that evidentials were an integral part of the depositions. Only about 15 depositions contain no evidentials at all, while 389 depositions do. Although admittedly a blunt instrument, this gives a frequency of about four evidentials per deposition.

Table 1. Constructions and semantic categories of evidentials

Construction	Sensory	Inference	Assumption	Quotative	TOTAL
Verb phrase	493 (95%)	45 (88%)	194 (86%)	725 (97%)	1457 (94%)
Prepositional phrase	13 (3%)	--	24 (11%)	6 (1%)	43 (3%)
Verb phrase + noun phrase/Noun	9 (2%)	--	3 (1%)	15 (2%)	27 (2%)

phrase + verb					
phrase					
Noun phrase	2 (<1%)	2 (4%)	3 (1%)	2 (<1%)	9 (1%)
Adverb	--	3 (6%)	--	--	3 (<1%)
Adjective	--	--	2 (1%)	--	2 (<1%)
Other	--	1 (2%)	--	--	1 (<1%)
TOTAL	517 (100%)	51 (100%)	226 (100%)	748 (100%)	1542 (100%)

In terms of semantic categories, Sensory and Quotative markers (517 and 748 instances respectively, or 34% and 49% of 1542 instances) clearly predominate among the semantic categories; Inference is infrequent (51 instances or 3%); and the related Assumption category is firmly in the middle (226 instances or 15%). As we shall see in the discussion of the individual categories, many evidentials are restricted to certain textual contexts where they appear to have clear epistemic extensions, in addition to marking source. Overall, the patterns indicate that the usage is very much dependent on the nature and context of the trial process in Salem. Arguably, it must have been crucial for the deponents to provide a source for their information in order to anticipate doubt about how the deponent could know what is being reported.

Clear patterns emerge in terms of the linguistic realization of evidentiality in the Salem documents. Table 1 shows that evidentiality is predominantly expressed through verb phrases. Overall, verb phrases make up 94% of the evidentials, with a split in frequency between Sensory and Quotative evidentials (both 95% and 97% respectively), on the one hand, and Inference and Assumption evidentials, on the other (88% and 86% respectively). However, within this general

category, there are also a number of constructions, and the different verb phrases take a number of different complementation patterns, as may be seen in (5)–(8).

(5) I beleue in my heart that martha cory is a dreadfull wicth (*RSWH*, no. 19; Assumption)

(6) She semid to be a woman throu in that gret work of conuiktion and conuartion which I pray god mak us all (*RSWH*, no. 317; Inference)

(7) thus our daughter continuing {about} two or three years constantli afirming to the <?> last that this goode how that is now seised was the cause of of her sorows (*RSWH*, no. 256; Quotative)

(8) but he emmedetly was gon as she said (*RSWH*, no. 85; Quotative)

The most common construction involving evidential verb phrases is *noun phrase + evidential verb phrase (in the present or past tense) + complementation*, as in (5) and (6). The subject noun phrase is usually the deponent if the evidential is Sensory or Assumption (5), or a second party, if the evidential is Quotative or Inference (6). The complementation patterns are very much verb specific (see also Whitt 2010; Aijmer 2009), although nominal *that*-clauses, infinitive clauses, and *-ing* clauses are the most frequent. Example (7) also shows that an alternative construction involving *participles + complementation* also occurs, but this is rare. So-called "comment clauses" (see Brinton 2008, esp. 2; Quirk et al. 1985, 1112–17) occur with some frequency, in particular involving Quotatives, as in (8).

The Verb phrase + noun phrase (or the reversed Noun phrase + verb phrase) pattern is closely related to the Verb phrase category. Occurring very infrequently (2% or 27 out of 1542 instances of evidentials), this pattern covers closely linked combinations (or composite predicates) where the Verb phrase + noun phrase can be said to correspond to a simple verb (see e.g. Brinton and Akimoto 1999, 2). In (9), for example, *took notice* can be said to correspond to *noticed*, which signals a sensory experience. However, some combinations involving the Noun phrase + verb phrase pattern are less closely connected, although the combination appears important for the evidential meaning to be expressed, as in (10), which indicates a Quotative (without a specific source). As can be seen, these combinations can occur with the same complementation patterns (*that*-clause, though in (9) *that* is left out) and in the same constructions (comment clause with *as*) as the verb phrases discussed earlier. This category (especially the composite predicates) thus underscores that verb phrases or verbal expressions are the main vehicles for evidential marking in the Salem depositions.

(9) upon the motion of hir finger we took notis they ware afflicted (*RSWH*, no. 111)

(10) I being at Groaton. some short tyme after John Willard. as the report went had beaten his wife I went to cal him home (*RSWH*, no. 485)

Prepositional phrases involving the prepositions *according to*, *by*, *in*, and *to* and noun phrases of various degrees of complexity represent the second most common category of evidential construction at 3%. Examples are found in (11)–(13).

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(11) in my sight ^{she} tooke vp s^d Dog vnder hir arme but Comeing vp nere to hir she had a Kegg or a halfe feirkin vnder the same arme (*RSWH*, no. 351)

(12) I saw no maide there but procters wife according to my understanding did stand att the dore (*RSWH*, no. 494)

(13) for to the best of ^{our} understanding ^{it was} near fiue hours a dying (*RSWH*, no. 362)

Although (11) is Sensory, prepositional phrases particularly express Assumption as in (12)–(13), and often seem to suggest limitations in the deponents' knowledge or indicate "hedging," as I will show later.

The other categories (Noun phrase, Adverb, Adjective, and Other) are marginal, all scoring at or below 1%, exemplified in (14)–(17).

(14) there was a report that y the said hows wife hade said y thay we hade givin the mear <?> brimston and oyl and y the like (*RSWH*, no. 322)

(15) vpon w^{ch} wth in a short Tyme after my father & mother Ridd their maer to Their neighbours house y^e same maer w^{ch} s^d hough would haue Borrowed w^{ch} semingly was well (*RSWH*, no. 327)

(16) I was jealous afterwards that it did (*RSWH*, no. 488)⁷

(17) shee sate still A while being as it wear Amazed (*RSWH*, no. 31)⁸

It is perhaps slightly surprising that adverbs are so uncommon: the three instances of adverbs are all represented by *seemingly* (as in (15)). Adverbs are usually discussed extensively in studies of evidentiality in Present-Day English, although it should be noted that those studies usually merge epistemic and evidential markers, thus obscuring clearly evidential markers (as they are defined in this study). However, part of the reason is probably that, as the *OED* indicates, many evidential adverbs did not appear on the scene until long after the Salem witch trials (e.g. *allegedly*, *reportedly*) or were very recent additions in the seventeenth century (e.g. *reputedly*, *reputatively*), although some adverbs with potential evidential meaning, such as *evidently*, were in circulation at the time.

It is possible that the heavy reliance on verb phrases or verbal expressions is genre-related, a hypothesis that would have to be tested on more varied material. At the same time, the frequency of the prepositional phrases (while marginal compared to verbs) shows that studies of evidentiality in English, which so far have focused on (a limited set of) verbs and adverbs, need to consider a broader inventory of constructions if we are to gain a full understanding of evidentiality in English.

Sensory

Sensory evidentials signal a direct, first-hand experience of an event through vision, hearing, touch, smell, or taste. Not unexpectedly, only vision and hearing appear with some frequency in the Salem depositions, while touch is rare, and smell and taste non-existent. Overall, this distribution mirrors Whitt's (2010, 219) findings of the frequency of the set of sensory evidential verbs that he considers. The non-existence of evidentials of smell and taste is perhaps not

surprising in the legal context of the Salem trials, where what had been seen and heard must have been front and center.

Vision is by far the most frequent category, with 414 or 80% of the 517 instances (cf. Table 1). Visual perception is indicated by a number of means, primarily by verb phrases or verb phrase + noun phrases, such as *behold*, *espy*, *observe*, *perceive*, *take notice*, and, the visual evidential par excellence, *see*.⁹ Prepositional phrases also occur, such as *to our observation* and *in my sight*. Within this category, I have also included markers that are less directly visual (although perception is certainly implied), but which seem to suggest a more general experience of the situation. The verb *find*, in particular, falls within this category, as illustrated in (18). In this example, visual perception is involved, although it is not as straightforwardly signaled as with one of the verbs of seeing.

(18) I found my mare standing leaning with her buttocks against a tree (*RSWH*, no. 377)

Visual evidentials present some methodological challenges. Whitt (2010, 26) makes a distinction between two uses of *see*: one that simply indicates perception ("I see the house") and one that indicates source of information ("I see the house burning"). The distinction rests on the second sentence having two propositions and hence "contain[ing] [an] additional deictic component because it points to the speaker's evidence and does not solely indicate an act of perception" (Whitt 2010, 26). In the context of the Salem trials, this distinction becomes slightly problematic. Compare, for instance, examples (19)–(23).

(19) I saw the Apperishtion of Sarah good goe and hurt and afflect the bodyes [^]{of} Elizabeth parish Abigail williams and Ann putnam jur. (*RSWH*, no. 7)

(20) a little after ~~Mercy Lewes~~ [^]{Mary Warren} falling into a fit s^d Sheldon affirmed to the Grand jury that she saw s^d Good upon her (*RSWH*, no. 338)

(21) I saw the Apperishtion of Elizabeth procktor the wife of John procktor sen^r and she did Immediatly tortor me most greivously (*RSWH*, no. 50)

(22) I saw the apperishtion of Sarah good which did tortor me most greivously (*RSWH*, no. 9)

(23) I saw the Apperishtion of Abigail Hoobs the daughter of william Hoobs com and afflect me (*RSWH*, no. 71)

If we follow Whitt's (2010) classification, (19) is a clear example of evidentiality since it involves two (or more) propositions: "I saw" and "the Apperishtion...goe and hurt and afflect." Straightforward examples (such as (19)) usually involve the deponent observing the affliction of others. Although (20) does not have two clear propositions, it is clearly related, as it can be read as having two underlying propositions rather than simply signaling perception: "she saw" and "Good [being] upon her."

The problematic cases appear when there is no clear, explicit second proposition over which the verb phrase has scope; these cases could be classified as mere perception, if we follow Whitt (2010) strictly. These usually occur when the deponent observes the alleged witch and is

then afflicted by the witch, as in (21) and (22). Here a statement such as *I saw Sarah Good afflict me* would perhaps seem strange, almost as if it were an out-of-body experience; however, rare examples (x4) do show that such constructions are (marginally) possible, as in (23).

However, classifying examples such as (21) and (22) as evidentials may not necessarily be diverging from Whitt (2010), but instead expanding on his discussion. We might argue that these examples have an implicit second proposition (not expressed syntactically through a second verb phrase). In a sentence such as *I saw the house*, the existence of the house is (typically) taken for granted, while such an assumption is not necessarily true for a sentence such as *I saw the witch*. In this second sentence, the underlying proposition might be taken to be that the witch exists, and *I saw* marks the source of evidence for stating that existence.¹⁰ After all, what appears to be at stake in examples such as (21) and (22) is establishing the presence of the person or apparition as perceived through sight and underscoring the first-hand experience of the affliction. The deponent and/or recorder could theoretically have chosen a formulation such as *The apparition of Sarah Good was there* or *The apparition of Sarah Good most grievously tortured me* instead of the formulation in (22). However, possibly in order to anticipate a challenge of how the deponent knew it was Sarah Good or an apparition, the deposition makes clear that the information (the presence of Sarah Good's apparition and her subsequent afflicting) is indeed based on direct perception. Clarifying the identity of the alleged tormentor was undoubtedly a crucial part of the trial process. Consequently, at least in this trial context, all the usages in (19)–(23) seem possible to interpret as evidential and have thus been included in my study.¹¹

What is particularly striking about the visual evidentials is the context in which they occur. As hinted at above, the vast majority appears when deponents relate their own or others'

afflictions by alleged witches, who, the depositions insist, frequently appear in spectral form, as in (24) and (25).

(24) I saw the Apperishtion of Martha Cory greviously afflect mircy lewes (*RSWH*, no. 19)

(25) their I saw the apparition of the aboue said gooddy: Easteck: a choaking of mersey Lueis (*RSWH*, no. 205)

Spectral evidence experienced by some of the accusers alone was at the heart of the controversy that was the Salem trials. The accusers would claim to be attacked by the accused's apparition and fall into spasmodic fits. Although there was no objective way for the magistrates to assess this evidence, it was accepted blindly by most of them. Not until after a massive offensive by civic leaders and powerful clerics was spectral evidence disallowed. This in turn brought about the gradual abandonment of the whole trial process (see Hoffer 1997, 78–79, 129–31; Rosenthal 2009, 25–26).

The presence of a visual evidential may serve two overlapping functions in this context. Specifically, it may be a way of anticipating a challenge of the source of the deponent's information: how indeed did the deponent know that it was the apparition of Martha Cory or Goody Esty (as shown in (24) and (25)) that attacked Mercy Lewis? The answer, plainly highlighted by the visual evidential, is that the deponent claims to have witnessed it first-hand, through direct visual experience. However, more generally, using a visual evidential may be part of a strategy to make spectral evidence more palatable or convincing: it was a way of making the immaterial, abstract specters more concrete, something that could be and was (allegedly) seen.

The goal of utilizing an unambiguous marker indicating direct experience may have been to emphasize the "reality" of the specters and hence remove or assuage doubt. A reference to vision would thus have clear epistemic implications, functioning as a marker of certainty and emphasis, a marker that would lend credibility to the statement. Supporting these assumptions is the fact that, although there is theoretically the option of not using an evidential, as in *The apparition of Martha Cory grievously afflicted Mercy Lewis* instead of the formulation in (24), such non-evidential statements are very rare in connection with spectral evidence.

Auditory evidentials are much less common than visual evidentials: 94 out of 517 or 18% of the sensory evidentials refer to hearing, primarily with different constructions involving the verb *hear*, or less commonly with prepositional phrases such as *in my hearing*. These auditory evidentials are infrequently (14 instances) used to signal hearing a noise or sound (as in (26)), and, more commonly (80 instances), to indicate what a deponent claims to have heard someone say (as in (27)).

(26) we heard the back dore open (*RSWH*, no. 604)

(27) wee Heard Mary warrin seuerall Times say that the Majestrates Might as well Examine Keysars Daughter that had Bin Distracted Many Yeares And take Noatice of what shee said: as well as any of the Afflicted p^esons (*RSWH*, no. 262)

The second example (27) is clearly related to the Quotative category in that the deposition indicates that the evidence is based on someone else's report. However, while Quotatives simply signal that something has been said or told, in constructions with *hear*, there is an obvious

additional "hearing" element (see Whitt 2010, 10; for the question of hearsay, see the section on Quotatives). Although this may seem to be a redundant move, the use of an auditory evidential may have had an emphasis function, and it may tie in with the importance that New Englanders, especially Puritans, afforded to listening. Kamensky (1997, 12–15) argues that listening and being able to accurately report what one had heard was a virtue among New Englanders, and a great deal of reliability was attributed to those rehearsed words. Indeed, according to Kamensky (1997, 13), "only when ear-witnesses' exact words were accurately restated, closely examined, and carefully weighed could the true aim of Puritan jurisprudence be accomplished." The pragmatic function of indicating something as *heard* rather than simply *told* may thus have been to imply the reliability of the evidence: the witness was there and could hear the very words that the alleged witch used. Considering this importance, marking something as heard is likely to have been taken very seriously. (Whether the witness actually reliably repeated the words without bias is of course another issue.)

Inference

The category of Inference has some relation to the Sensory category in that the deponents' basis for inference frequently seems to be an underlying sensory experience, although its exact nature is usually unclear (Chafe 1986, 266; Bednarek 2006, 657, n. 11; Aijmer 2009, 68, 76). Owing to the added level of interpretation, the evidence can be seen as indirect, rather than direct, as found with Sensory evidentials (for this division, see esp. Willett 1988, 57). In the Salem documents, Inference is signaled primarily by verbs, including *discern*, *appear*, and *look*, but the primary marker is *seem* (40 out of the 51 instances of Inference evidentials or 78%). *Seem* is primarily (31 out of 40 examples or 78%) found with infinitival complements (see (28) and (29) below),

which has been found to be the most common complementation pattern of *seem* in studies of historical as well as present-day material (Gisborne and Holmes 2007, 11; Aijmer 2009, 74). The adverb *seemingly* occurs three times and the prepositional phrase *to his seeming* once. Slightly surprisingly, inferential *must*, which is often discussed as a quintessential evidential of this category (see e.g. Chafe 1986, 266), does not occur at all. Part of the explanation may lie in the relative newness of inferential *must*, which, according to Traugott (1989, 42) and Molencki (2003, 82), did not begin appearing until the seventeenth century. However, inferential *must needs*, which also does not occur in the Salem depositions, had been around since at least the fourteenth century (Molencki 2003, 81; see also *OED* s.v. *must* v¹ 8).¹²

Inferential evidentials in general and *seem* in particular are found in two main contexts: descriptions of physical events and discussions of people's or animals' health condition or state of mind. Illustrative examples are found in (28) and (29).

(28) it semed to be sumthing Like a Littell Doge (*RSWH*, no. 40)

(29) we whos nams are under written: can<e> testiefie if cald to it that goodde nurs haue bene trobled with an Infirmitie of body for many years which the Juree of wemen seme to be Afraid it should be some{thing} Elce (*RSWH*, no. 294)

In descriptions of physical events (as in (28)), *seem* usually indicates an observable event or state that the deponent is unclear about how to interpret. In examples such as (29), however, it is less clear that the inference is based on observation or observation alone. The deponents may of course have seen the reaction of the jury of women, who were convened to perform a physical

examination of a woman to discover so-called witches' teats, which would have been seen as a sure sign of allegiance with the devil (Hoffer 1997, 103). However, considering that the deponents were unlikely to have been present during the examination, it is more likely that the ultimate basis for the inference is the report of the jury or what they have heard about the jury's deliberations (exactly how is unknown). According to Aikhenvald (2004, 373–74), discussions of other people's "internal states" (such as the one in (29)) are often marked with inferential evidentials in other languages as well.

In both cases, the depositions highlight that the source of the information is indirect: they indicate a level of interpretation rather than a simple statement of direct observation. A number of studies suggest that *seem* in these kinds of contexts in Present-Day English (especially with infinitival complementation) has a function of a hedge, marking doubt or reservation (Aijmer 2009, 76; see also Gisborne and Holmes 2007, 10–11; Aikhenvald 2004, 165, 373). Similar epistemic extensions are undoubtedly at work in the Salem documents as well. The depositions do not portray the deponents as taking full responsibility for the information; in other words, the deponents do not make categorical assertions, such as *It was a little black dog* or *The jury of women is afraid that it should be something else*. The deponents and/or recorders may have recognized that categorical statements about other people's mental state would likely have been met with some suspicion: how could the deponents possibly know their fellow New Englanders' state of mind? Using an inferential may thus have been natural to avoid challenges.

However, hedging (especially in descriptions of physical events) may also have worked against the credibility of the deponents. O'Barr (1982, ch. 5, esp. 67–75) has famously suggested that witnesses in present-day trials who use a relatively large number of features such as hedges and hesitation markers may be seen as less credible than witnesses who use fewer indicators of

that kind (see also Morrill and Facciola 1992; Holtgraves and Lasky 1999). This claim is based on experimentation where informants were asked to rank the convincingness, competence, trustworthiness, etc. of witnesses that were using what O’Barr termed a “powerful” or “powerless” style. The styles were delineated on the basis of the use or lack of use of intensifiers, hedges, hesitation forms, polite forms, and a range of other features. The use of inferential evidentials (especially when expressing less than certainty about the nature of an event) may thus have contributed to diminished credibility.¹³ This comparison should of course not be taken as more than a mere suggestion, as many caveats apply. O’Barr’s study (1982) dealt with a different “genre,” consisting in constructed witness statements recorded and listened to by the evaluators. Furthermore, it is not clear whether hedges carried the same negative connotations in a seventeenth-century legal context, and we do not know how these hedges interact with other linguistic features (with negative and positive connotations).¹⁴ Although the impact can never be assessed with confidence,¹⁵ the relative scarcity of inferential markers may perhaps be an indication that people recognized the problems of hedging, even if it was for legitimate reasons (cf. Stygall 1994, 142).¹⁶

Assumption

The Assumption category comprises markers that signal the deponents’ mental faculties as the source of the information. Included in the category are expressions of understanding, thinking, belief, remembrance, judgment, knowledge, etc. The Assumption evidentials are predominantly verb phrases (as indicated in Table 1), including *apprehend*, *believe*, *conceive*, *judge*, *know*, *remember*, *think*, and *understand*. Furthermore, prepositional phrases are particularly common in the Assumption category compared to the other categories (see Table 1), with constructions such

as *in/to his/my/our apprehension, according to/to our (best) judgment/knowledge/understanding,*
and *to/in my remembrance.*

The Assumption category is clearly related to Inference in that the evidence is indirect compared to the direct experience indicated by Sensory evidentials (see Willett 1988, 57). It is thus tempting to see Assumption marking as having clear epistemic extensions of uncertainty and doubt, similar to many of the examples of inferential *seem*. After all, the evidence presented is the deponents' (subjective) assessment of an event or phenomenon, not their direct observation of it. However, although some examples appear to mark that the deponents have limited knowledge or that they have reservations about the veracity of the statement, others seem to have the opposite function: to mark emphasis, certainty, and conviction. The interpretation very much depends on the construction used and the context of the usage (cf. Holmes 1990, 187). Assumption evidentials must thus be seen as potential hedges as well as potential boosters.

When the evidential is in the form of a prepositional phrase or in the form of a verb phrase within a comment clause (e.g. *as I judged, as far as I know*), the depositions often appear to highlight the deponents' limited scope of knowledge, allowing for other interpretations or for a mistake on the part of the deponents. In (30), for example, the deposition suggests by the inclusion of the comment clause that the statement of "three of the fingers" is an estimation and hence uncertain;¹⁷ it leaves room for the possibility that it may have been more or fewer. Similarly, in (31), the statement is not categorical, but limited to the deponent's understanding of the current situation and of the events reported on previously in the deposition (not included in the example).

(30) he put out his hand among the clothes and took hold of her hand and brought it vp to his mouth and bitt three of the fingers (as he Judg) to the breaking of the bones (*RSWH*, no. 139)

(31) I this Deponant doe testife y^t to y^e Best of my vnderstanding was y^e same mare y^t James Hough Junio<r> Belonging to Ipswich farmes husband To Elizabeth Hough. would haue haue Borrowed of y^e s^d Comings (*RSWH*, no. 396)

If indeed these formulations are hedges (as they appear to be), they may fall under the same category as inferential *seem*: they may contribute to less credibility of the evidence and the deponent (cf. Stygall's 1994, 138–39, discussion of jurors' reaction to the expression *in my opinion*). However, the same caveats as discussed in the section of Inference apply.

Other instances of Assumption evidentials can more easily be accounted for as boosters of the reliability or relevance of the report provided in the depositions. Indeed, the very fact that the Assumption evidentials are subjective and evaluative may have made some of them a crucial part of the deposition narratives. The verb *believe*, in particular, which is by far the most common Assumption verb (93 out of 194 verb instances or 48%, in 79 different depositions), appears to serve such a function.¹⁸ *Believe* is by and large restricted to one particular context: the end of depositions, especially those written by Thomas Putnam, a militia sergeant and former parish clerk, who was also the father of Ann Putnam Jr., one of the most insistent accusers during the Salem proceedings.¹⁹ In this context, the deponents express their strong belief that an accused person is guilty of witchcraft, as in (32). The belief is frequently underscored by the adverb *verily* ('truly') and/or the prepositional phrase *in my heart*.

(32) I verily beleue in my heart that George Jacobs is a most dreadful wizzard and that he hath very often afflicted and tormented me ~~and mary walcott and Eliz: Hubbrd~~ by his acts of wicthcraft (*RSWH*, no. 134)

Preceding this statement of “belief” is the deponent’s report on both seeing and conversing with the alleged witch in spectral form (not cited here). The insistence on meticulously recording the deponent’s subjective belief would thus seem unnecessary: a report of her sensory experience of allegedly horrific tortures would presumably have been enough to convict an accused person several times over. The key to the usage may instead lie in the narrative structure. In Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) famous discussion of the structure of oral narratives, one of the central components of a narrative is “evaluation.” According to them, narratives must contain an evaluative statement by the narrator that makes clear to the listener what the relevance or point of the narrative is; in other words, the narrator has to avoid the question “So what?” for the narrative to be successful (Labov and Waletzky 1967, 33, 37). The Salem depositions very much resemble narratives as described by Labov and Waletzky (1967), and the evaluation component is thus highly relevant for the depositions. For the deponents (and the recorders), it would have been crucial to avoid the “So what?” question, because doubt about the relevance of the deposition could presumably have prevented the deposition from being admitted into evidence and considered during the trial. The *believe* formula (as exemplified earlier) can have left no doubt about the deponents’ evaluation and the claim of the relevance of the deposition to the case at hand: all of the experiences by the deponents translate into their conviction that the accused is indeed a witch. By its very Assumption status, then, the evidential verb *believe* would add to the

case built earlier, where the deponents reported on what was seen and heard. Evaluation, though subjective, would be needed for the narrative to be convincing.

To some (limited) extent, we can gauge the success of the formula by looking at whether a deposition that contains the formula was admitted into evidence either at the grand jury deliberations or at the trials (cf. fn. 15). Although caveats apply, there would seem to be a correlation between the use of the formula and admission into evidence: as many as 74 out of 79 (or 94%) of the depositions that contain a *believe* formula were used at either or both hearings, while five (or 6%) were not used at one or the other. The corresponding numbers for depositions that do not contain the formula (where admission can be determined) are: 57% admitted into either deliberations and 43% not admitted into either. This does seem to indicate that, although the formula was not necessary for admission into evidence, it may have been a contributing factor.

Quotative

In many ways, the Quotative category is the most complex. As indicated in the discussion on methodology, the Salem depositions frequently contain several discourse layers and a mixture of the deponents' narrative and their reports on discussions that they have overheard or participated in, cast as direct or indirect speech (see also Grund et al. 2009, 67). These reported discussions also come in various guises and what is reported is not always straightforward "information." That is, the report is not only a set of statements/propositions that are attributed to someone else's telling. Instead, we also find dialogues, questions and answers, predictions and hypothetical statements; and all are introduced with phrases that could potentially be interpreted as Quotative evidentials. The interpretation largely depends on how we interpret the concept of

“information” (see below). This presents some methodological challenges in terms of what to include or exclude. Table 2 divides up the instances of potential Quotatives into categories based on the type of “information” that they introduce; and Examples (33)–(38) below illustrate the main types listed in the Table 2. (Since the focus is on “information” type, I give percentages for columns rather than rows.)

Table 2 Quotatives and “information” types

Type	Dialogue	Non-dialogue	TOTAL
Statement	77 (45%)	321 (55%)	398 (53%)
Claim	60 (35%)	166 (29%)	226 (30%)
Question	30 (18%)	11 (2%)	41 (5%)
Command	4 (2%)	79 (14%)	83 (11%)
TOTAL	171 (23%)	577 (77%)	748 (≈100%)

(33) the man told her [“her” written over “me”] his name was Jacobs the Father of Geo: Jacobs & the Grandfather of Margaret Jacobs (*RSWH*, no. 135; statement, non-dialogue)

(34) thes moring [= morning] also M^{is} Lawson and hir daughter Ann appeared to me whom I knew: and tould me that Mr Burroughs murthered them (*RSWH*, no. 125; statement, non-dialogue)

(35) asked her whear she liued she told mee shee liued in boston prisson (*RSWH*, no. 164; statement, dialogue)

(36) mr carr Immediattly said boys what did you see and we both said a blue boar (*RSWH*, no. 599; question, non-dialogue)

(37) he bid me that I should not Eate aney of his Cheires (*RSWH*, no. 482; command, non-dialogue)

(38) the sd mart<a>n [...] revile<d> them with many foule words saying we had took a fals oathe and [^]{sayd} that we shoold never prosper and that we shoold never prosper for our so doing (*RSWH*, no. 142; claim, non-dialogue)

Example (33) is straightforwardly evidential: the deposition ascribes the source of the information that the man's name was Jacobs to the man himself; the information was not prompted by a question or given as part of a dialogue between the deponent and the speaker (hence, non-dialogue). Even in (34), the usage appears to be evidential: the deposition could simply have stated *Mr. Burroughs murdered them* (although in the context the flow of the text would perhaps seem slightly quirky), but to show where this information comes from, the deposition highlights Mistress Lawson and her daughter as the source.

Examples (35)–(38), on the other hand, are less straightforwardly evidential. Example (35) represents a question-and-answer or dialogue sequence (cast as indirect speech). Unlike in (34), one can hardly claim that there was a choice to simply say *She lived in Boston prison* since

phrasing the statement as an answer is already conditioned by the preceding question. So, the motivation for "she told" could be attributed to the discourse structure rather than the wish to provide a source. At the same time, if the deponent and/or recorder had chosen to cast the deposition or the sequence as a narrative by the deponent, the statement could simply have been given as a fact, dropping the question and providing no source. It is possible that the preference for dialogue/reported speech over narrative should be seen as a general evidential strategy since the dialogue structure delineates clearly what information comes from the mouths of others.

Examples (36)–(38) are yet more complicated. (36) does not provide "information" per se that is backed up with a source indication; *said* heads a question. In (37), *bid* introduces a reported command or request. In (38), both the statements attributed to Martin are Martin's claims, one a claim that is true according to Martin and the other a prediction of the future. In this case (unlike in (34)), the statements could not hypothetically be presented without the phrases of saying, because it would change the meaning of the sentence: *We had taken a false oath* and *We should never prosper...* would indicate that the claims were made *by* the deponents rather than *about* them. These "Claims" frequently involve modal expressions, implying necessity, prediction, futurity, etc. Expressions of saying that introduce claims, questions, and commands would thus seem to be only marginally relevant to this evidentiality discussion. However, again, it is possible that if the deposition had been framed as a narrative rather than as reported speech the same information could have been presented differently. For example, giving the statements in (38) as by Martin would thus be part of a larger strategy of evidentiality and hence providing a source for the information presented (as suggested above): the point would be to highlight that the statement is not the deponent's but that it is secondary, a statement that the accused made and could be held responsible for (if the attribution is believed). This requires a

broader conceptualization of *information*: any textual string in the deposition could be seen as information (whether in the form of a statement, question, claim) that could be indicated as coming from a source. Especially in a society that afforded a great deal of importance to language (see below), marking something as spoken by someone else (even if it is a question or command) would allow others to evaluate the language or the implications of the language allegedly used by a second party. In this study, I have thus been maximalist and included such cases, but future studies may want to refine this classification further. The choice to include "Claims," "Questions," etc. impacts primarily the overall frequency of the Quotative category, but has less of an impact on the qualitative aspect of the category, such as the constructions used: the majority of specific markers are found with straightforward, non-dialogue statements as well, which are central to this category.

As with all the other categories, Quotatives are predominantly realized as verb phrases (725 of 748 instances, or 97%; see Table 1), which include a wide range of verbs of saying, such as *affirm*, *complain*, *declare*, *inform*, and *testify*. However, the two primary Quotatives are *say* and *tell* with 259 and 256 instances, respectively, together representing 71% of the verb phrase instances. In the vast majority of examples, the verb is complemented by a nominal *that*-clause that presents the statement introduced as spoken by someone else. Verb phrases + noun phrases (or Noun phrases + verb phrases) are more common in the Quotative category than in any other category. Seven of the fifteen instances involve Quotatives with no specific source, such as *reports say*, *news came*, and *rumor went*.

As indicated in the discussion of the classification scheme, there are two types of Quotatives: with or without a specific source, exemplified in (39) and (40). In (39), we do not learn who had reported Willard's abuse of his wife, while (40) makes perfectly clear that the

source of the report is the alleged apparition of Rebecca Nurse (or at least the statement is attributed to it).

(39) I being at Groaton. some short tyme after John Willard. as the report went had beaten his wife I went to cal him home (*RSWH*, no. 485)

(40) and on the 3^d of may in the euening the Apperishtion of Rebekah nurs tould me she had a hand in the deaths of Benjamin Holton John Harrod Rebekah Sheppard. and seuerall others (*RSWH*, no. 292)

The two Quotative types appear at opposite ends of the frequency scale. Quotatives with a specific source account for as many as 730 instances out of 748 (or 98%), while Quotatives without a specific source represent 2% (18 of 748 instances). The sparse references to non-specific sources may signal that deponents (and/or recorders) perceived the potential weakness of such sources. There may be some support for this hypothesis even in passages where we do find Quotatives with no specific source. Usually the evidence pertains to peripheral information that is not crucial for the main story line or that does not form a major part of the allegation. For example, (39) represents the first sentence in Thomas Bailey's testimony, which revolves around some noises that Bailey heard when walking with the accused John Willard. The domestic abuse that is alluded to in passing does not resurface again: the information thus seems to be backgrounded. Perhaps because of its background status, highlighting it as without a specific source was less risky or indeed of no concern since the information was only tangential to the real case at hand.

The epistemic extensions and pragmatic functions that Quotative evidentials with a specific source may perform resemble those of the Assumption evidentials in that they span a great range and in that they are highly dependent on context. Most prominent among these seems to be the shifting of responsibility for the statement from the deponent to someone else, which may have several different semantic repercussions. In (41), for example, by attributing the statement explicitly to George Burroughs (the accused), the deponent underscores that Burroughs himself confessed to making a woman a witch.

(41) also he tould me that he made: Abigail Hoobs: a wicth (*RSWH*, no. 124)

Putting the words into the mouth of the accused probably added to the believability of the case, especially in a society that put a great deal of weight on accurately rehearsed words, as Kamensky (1997, 12–15) suggests (see also the discussion of Sensory auditory evidentials). Indeed, Kamensky (1997, 152–54, 160) argues convincingly that language and words were a central part of witch trials; men and women were believed to reveal themselves as witches and wizards and to be in league with the devil through their use of language that did not fit especially Puritan norms (including cursing, lying, threats, etc.). Paying close attention to what people said was thus crucial to ferreting out potential witches. This belief in the power of language may go a long way to account for the frequency with which words are ascribed to or reported as given by alleged witches and apparitions in the Salem depositions.

By using Quotatives, deponents may also disassociate themselves from the statement and suggest that the statement may be uncertain or even false (cf. Biber 2004, 111). This strategy may be behind the usage in (42).

(42) our dog bit hir by the leg as she said (*RSWH*, no. 351)

Although Susannah Martin, an alleged witch, claimed that she had been bitten by the dog, the deponent, Elizabeth Clark, may imply that Martin's statement is false, that she simply made it up. After all, Clark is not reporting the incident as fact (*Our dog bit her by the leg*). Similar uses of Quotatives are found in a number of other languages (Aikhenvald 2004, 180, 182, 375).

From a modern perspective, the frequent references to what other people have told the deponents are surprising. In a present-day courtroom (at least in the USA), many of the statements that are supported with Quotatives in the Salem depositions would be inadmissible: they would be seen as hearsay, since the deponents do not claim to have first-hand knowledge of the claims of the statements; they are simply rehearsing the experiences of others (*Black's Law Dictionary* s.v. *hearsay*; Stygall 1994, 138). However, the attitude towards hearsay differed in the seventeenth century, where the notion was quite complicated and in flux, as shown by Langbein (2003). Although objections were sometimes voiced in seventeenth-century trials, it is not until the mid-eighteenth century that a clearly negative attitude to hearsay evidence emerges in the legal system in England (Langbein 2003, 233–42). The situation in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, on the other hand, is unclear, and little seems to have been written on the hearsay rule in early colonial times.²⁰ However, there is both direct and indirect support for the claim that hearsay was readily accepted in Salem, and that hearsay was thus treated in a similar way as in England. Although a number of practical guides and law books were undoubtedly available to the Salem magistrates on which to base their proceedings, one of the prime sources is likely to have been Michael Dalton's *A Country Justice*, first issued in 1618 and re-issued in a number of

Peter J. Grund. 2012. "The Nature of Knowledge: Evidence and Evidentiality in the Witness Depositions from the Salem Witch Trials." *American Speech* 87(1): 7–38. (accepted manuscript version, post-peer review)

subsequent editions in the seventeenth century (Hoffer 1998, 7; Rosenthal 2009, 18). The 1690 edition, the latest edition at the time of the Salem trials, does not appear to include a discussion of hearsay per se. However, in the description of different categories of witnesses, it is stated that "[i]f one be an Accuser upon his own knowledge, sight or hearing, and he shall utter the same to another, that other may be an Accuser" (Dalton 1690, 408). This at least seems to imply that the evidence put forward by this second accuser, even if secondary, would be accepted, and hence that the Salem magistrates would have had precedent for using such evidence.

More directly, the depositions themselves attest to the practice of considering hearsay as legitimate evidence. The annotation *jurat in curia* 'swears in court' (or sometimes simply *jurat* or even *sworn*) normally reveals that a deposition was used at trial, where it would have been read aloud and sworn to by the deponent. Not all extant depositions carry this phrase, but many that contain what we would now refer to as hearsay evidence do. (43) is an illustrative example. After about 20 lines of texts (not quoted here), the deponents reveal that they have no first-hand knowledge at all of the events; instead, it is simply a report of what Joanna Hoar told the deponents about her experiences, as seen in (43). Notwithstanding the second-hand nature of the evidence, the deposition was apparently admitted into evidence during the trial of Dorcas Hoar and sworn to in court (indicated by the "Jurat in Curia" at the end).

(43) {no<te>}: this aboue written was declcard to the two aboue said deponants at the hows of

Thomas Cox by Jone Hoar doughter to dorkes: and farther saith not

[Hand 2] Jurat in Curia. (*RSWH*, no. 155)

Despite our modern objections to this kind of evidence, it is clear that it was frequently used and that the use was probably sanctioned by legal procedure. More generally, the frequency and standing of reported evidence may perhaps again be related to the importance afforded to speech and hearing in New England (as suggested by Kamensky 1997, 12–15): if listening and rehearsing words was a valued skill, it may have been natural to at least consider re-tellings of other people's experiences as valid evidence. The frequency of occurrences shows that a more important distinction for the Salem authorities or the community at large may have been the one between statements with a specific source and those without a specific source: the number of the latter category is very limited and the examples are mostly peripheral, as shown above.

Concluding Remarks

As this study has shown, the Salem deponents and the recorders of their depositions made use of a number of features to mark where the information contained in the depositions came from. The fact that verbs predominate perhaps justifies previous studies' focus on verbs. However, the functional approach adopted in this study (that is, not limiting the study to pre-selected features) reveals that other constructions also appear to carry evidential meaning, most notably prepositional phrases and phrases involving verb phrases in combination with noun phrases.

Studying the full semantic range of evidentiality also showed the relative frequency of different semantic categories. Marking is particularly prominent in terms of evidence based on seeing, hearing, or reports from second-hand sources, while Inference and various notions collected under the umbrella term of Assumption are less commonly marked. I suggest that this should probably be seen as a reflection of the nature of the legal material and the larger context of New England and especially Puritan jurisprudence and communal values. Direct sensory

experience as well as the purported (usually self-incriminatory) statements of alleged witches was at the center of the experiences of the deponents and the evidence that they reported. Viewed from the perspective of the legal process and of the community more generally, markers of different semantic categories can be said to have different pragmatic or discourse-related functions, often restricted to certain contexts. Markers of seeing may have been employed to provide support for spectral evidence in particular, while Quotatives could help to highlight that the report consisted of the accused's very words, which would have held a premium among New Englanders. Even clearly evaluative markers such as *believe* seem to have promoted the relevance and authority of the deponents' narratives. My findings thus suggest that marking the source of information was a very deliberate strategy in many Salem depositions. In a trial process (including pre-hearings and grand jury procedures), it was presumably important to establish the basis of the deponents' claims in order to evaluate the reliability of the information, and source marking appears often to be employed in order to emphasize the credibility and reliability of the evidence (cf. Pomerantz 1984, 613; Fennell 2011, 28–29).

Overall, this study demonstrates that evidentiality, even if it is signaled lexically or syntactically instead of morphologically, is a valid category of investigation in English. It also makes clear that studying evidentiality can give insights not only into the deployment of various linguistic features in the Salem documents, but also the potential power of the words in terms of positioning the evidence of the depositions. Clearly, to fully understand the Salem depositions, we need to pay attention to the way the deponents' information is presented, not only to what information is provided. In turn, in order to fully understand the language, we need to contextualize it within the particular socio-cultural and legal setting that was the Salem witch trials (see also Hiltunen 2010).

More studies of early North American material that consider other features from this kind of perspective are needed to reveal the close connection between context and language that is so familiar to us from present-day circumstances. More specific results of this study should also be pursued in other studies to see if the findings (such as the heavy reliance on verbs) may be specific to Salem or to the genre of deposition. A missing piece of the puzzle is to investigate systematically how the contexts where marking occurs relate to contexts where no marking appears, which would present special challenges, as I have argued.

¹ I am grateful to James W. Hartman, Bernard Rosenthal, Erik Smitterberg, Molly M. Zahn, and two anonymous reviewers for reading earlier versions of this article, and to David Konig for information on hearsay. Naturally, any errors are my own.

² Note, however, the growing number of studies of the Salem examination documents (which record the interrogation of alleged witches) from a pragmatic perspective (such as Kahlas-Tarkka and Rissanen 2011; Chaemsaitong 2009; Doty and Hiltunen 2002).

³ Multiple depositions sometimes appear in the same document and are hence labeled under the same number in *RSWH* (e.g. nos. 14 and 18). These have been counted as separate depositions in this study. I excluded depositions that do not survive in manuscript but only come down to us in, usually much later, editions (e.g. *RSWH*, nos. 643, 645, 646, 647). If a deposition survives in more than one copy, I include only one copy (e.g. *RSWH*, nos. 497 and 498). I also excluded 15 depositions that did not contain any evidentials.

⁴ For a more exhaustive discussion of the Salem deposition or depositions in general, see Grund et al. (2009); Grund and Walker (2011).

⁵ Self-authored depositions can be very different from depositions recorded by a second person in terms of their linguistic features (Grund forthcoming): in the former, it is the deponent's own language; in the latter, the deponent's language is filtered through the recorder. Since so many recorders remain unknown, it has not been within the scope of this study to separate the two categories.

⁶ This is related to the distinction often made in historical pragmatics between "form-to-function mapping" and "function-to-form mapping." However, the distinction is usually not made in pragmaphilology, but only in diachronic pragmatics, the other major branch of historical pragmatics (Taavitsainen and Jucker 2010: 13–14).

⁷ *Jealous* here means 'suspicious' or 'apprehensive' (*OED* s.v. *jealous* 4–5). The meaning of the phrase is thus something like *I suspected that...* or *I feared that...*, marking the person's mental faculties as the source for the statement.

⁸ I have interpreted the fixed clause *as it were* as a marker of the deponent's interpretation (or inference), since it appears to be close in meaning to *as it seemed*, where sensory evidence is used for an inference about the person's state of mind. As I will show in the discussion on Inference, conclusions about the mental state of a person is a prime location for inferential markers.

⁹ There are no clear examples of the verb *see* referring to more abstract, cognitive faculties, although the *OED* (s.v. *see*) records instances of the latter sense from Middle English onwards.

¹⁰ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

¹¹ Out of 502 verb phrases or verb phrase and noun phrase constructions, 154 instances (or 31%) take noun phrase objects, similar to examples (21) and (22). The remaining examples follow the pattern in (19), although instead of an infinitive, a verb phrase with a present or past participle may be used, or a finite *that*-clause may replace the non-finite construction.

¹² Some scholars argue that *must* is never exclusively evidential, but often or always epistemic (see esp. de Haan 1999: 99; Traugott 1989: 42).

¹³ It is quite possible that such "hedging" (if that is how it was perceived) could have been conscious, in order to avoid saying something damning about neighbors or friends.

¹⁴ Some scholars of forensic linguistics have also challenged O'Barr's (1982) framework, questioning various aspects of the methodology and assumptions, and some have obtained results that contradict O'Barr's findings, although supporting evidence is also plentiful (see Morrill and Facciola 1992: 193–197; Thompson 2002).

¹⁵ An indirect way to evaluate the possibility would be to look at whether the deposition that contains a "hedge" was admitted into evidence either during trial or during the grand jury deliberations, which would determine if the accused would stand trial; if a deposition was used at either it would carry appropriate annotation (see the discussion of Quotatives below). The use of the deposition during the proceedings would indicate that the authorities

considered the deposition important enough to admit into evidence. The result of such a survey shows that the use of "hedges" is not clearly correlated with either admission or non-admission into evidence. 18 of the 33 depositions that contain *seem*, *to his seeming*, or *seemingly* were admitted at one or both of the trial and grand jury hearings; 15 depositions were not. Again, the caveats outlined earlier apply.

¹⁶ Some features, such as hesitations (e.g. modern *um* and *eh*) and discourse markers (e.g. modern *well*, *I mean*), which may act as hedges in some contexts, may of course never have been written down although they were used by the deponents. They may have been seen as less relevant than the substance of the deposition (cf. Grund 2007b; Kytö and Walker 2003, 225).

¹⁷ Less likely, the comment clause should be taken with the statement following "to the breaking of the bones."

¹⁸ The third most common verb is *think* (x29 or 15%).

¹⁹ For Putnam's role during the trials, see Rosenthal (2009: 30–31); Hiltunen and Peikola (2007: 57–60); Grund (forthcoming).

²⁰ I am grateful to Prof. David Konig (Washington University, St. Louis), who is an expert on early American legal history, for pointing me to Langbein's (2003) treatment of hearsay and for his comment on the lack of studies in an American context (personal communication August 11, 2011).

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