

Grammaticalisation and L2 acquisition of evidentiality: a corpus-based pilot study on English and French



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Outline

2

1. Theoretical background
 1. Evidentiality in English and French
 2. Grammaticalisation and acquisition
2. Research questions and methodology
3. Corpus analysis
 1. Evidentiality in L1 English and French
 2. Evidentiality in the L2 data
4. Discussion

Introduction

- Evidentiality =the linguistic encoding of the mode of access to the uttered information. (*see* Aikhenvad 2004, Tournadre 2008, Schenner 2010a)
- From a usage-based perspective, evidentiality is expressed in English and French with a variety of lexical tools used at different frequencies in the 2 systems.
- Evidentiality in indo-European languages still under-investigated (Squartini, Ed., 2007, and Diewald & Smirnova, Eds., 2010)

What is an 'evidential language'?

The example of Tibetan

4

a) *khong ril-song*
he fall-**DIR AOR**
'He fell.'

b) *khong ril-bzhag*
he fall-**INF PFCT**
'He fell.'

c) *khong ril-pa.red -ze*
he fall-**FACT AOR -HSAY**
'He fell.'



Evidentiality in English and French

5

- Not a highly grammaticalized concept.
 - Not obligatory
 - Not very frequent
- Semantic concept with various formal realizations (modal verbs, adverbs, verbal expressions...) to express direct perception, inference and hearsay.

Frequent Evidentials in English and French (Mélac 2014)

6

- Perception verbs: *see, hear / voir, entendre*
- Copular verbs: *look, sound, feel, seem / paraître*
- Cognition verbs: *I guess, I suppose / j'imagine*
- Modals: *must, should / devoir, pouvoir*
- Adverbs: *apparently, presumably / apparemment*
- Idioms: *be said to / avoir l'air*
- Tense: *conditional* (hearsay in French)

Acquisition and grammaticalization

Giacalone-Ramat (1992, 1999, 2000), Diessel (2011)

7

- Striking parallels between the semantic development of grammatical markers in diachrony and in language acquisition (Diessel 2011)
- Grammaticalisation in diachrony: « movement toward structure » (Hopper 1987:138). Usually movement towards morphology.
 - Sum of variations at individual level spreading through a linguistic community across a period of time.
- In L2 acquisition:
 - The learner's task is to master the target grammatical structure (Giacalone-Ramat 1992) → automatization of the use of TL markers.
 - Observation of learners' productions at different proficiency levels illustrates the acquisitional path towards TL use.

Acquisition and grammaticalization

Giocalone-Ramat (1992, 1999, 2000), Diessel (2011)

8

- Does the process of L1/L2 acquisition parallel the diachronic process of grammaticalisation?
 - No: see Diessel 2011
 - Yes: principle of unidirectionality of change from lexical categories to grammatical ones. (Giocalone-Ramat 2000)


Acquisition and grammaticalization

Giacalone-Ramat (1992, 1999, 2000), Diessel (2011)

9

- Our hypotheses

Study of L2 oral production provides insights as to the degree of grammaticalisation of source and target language linguistic markers:

- The more grammaticalized a marker is in SL, the more ingrained → difficult for L2 speaker to reconceptualize if TL presents different patterns.
-  ○ The more grammaticalized a marker is in TL, the more frequent in the input, and the easiest to identify and include in the output for the learner.

Research questions

10

- What evidential markers are used by French and English native speakers?
- What usage of evidential markers by learners of French and English?
 - At what stage do evidential markers appear in learner productions?
- What does this tell us about the grammaticalization of evidential markers in French and English?

Method: stimulus

11

- **Film retelling task eliciting narrative discourse.**
 - A task which includes direct perception and should therefore elicit evidential markers (direct and inferential).
- **Stimulus: Reksio, 5mn long cartoon featuring a little dog and his master.**
- **Task instruction: « Watch the cartoon and then tell the interviewer what happened. »**



Method: Database

12

- Database:
 - 10 native speakers of French (control group)
 - 10 native speakers of English (control group)
 - 10 advanced learners: 5 EngL1 FrL2 and 5 FrL1 EngL2
 - 10 upper intermediate learners: 5 EngL1 FrL2 and 5 FrL1 EngL2
 - 10 lower intermediate learners: 5 EngL1 FrL2 and 5 FrL1 EngL2
- 3234 utterances (1vb= 1 utterance)

Table 1. Method: Participants

13

				Gender	
Group		N=	Age	M	F
ENGLISH	NNSs				
	Lower intermediate	5	24	1	4
	Upper intermediate	5	20	1	4
	Advanced	5	27.2	4	1
	NSs	10	25.4	5	5
FRENCH	NNSs				
	Lower intermediate	5	20.8	–	5
	Upper intermediate	5	22.2	2	3
	Advanced	5	26.2	2	3
	NSs	10	30.3	6	4

Table 2. Description of database

14

	Nb of participants producing evidentials	Nb of utterances with evidentials	Total nb of utterances	% utterances with evidentials
EngL1	10/10	27	1158	2,3
FrL1	5/10	13	857	1,5
EngL1 FrL2 Adv	2/5	6	249	2,4
EngL1 FrL2 Up Int	0/5	-	197	-
EngL1 FrL2 Low Int	1/5	1	97	1
FrL1 EngL2 Adv	5/5	17	278	6,1
FrL1 EngL2 Up Int	3/5	8	224	3,6
FrL1 EngL2 Low Int	1/5	1	174	0,6
Total	27/50	73	3234	2,3

Table 3. Types of evidentials

15

	Direct perception	Inference	Total
EngL1	2	25	27
FrL1	4	9	13
EngL1 FrL2 Adv	1	5	6
EngL1 FrL2 Up Int	-	-	-
EngL1 FrL2 Low Int	1	-	1
FrL1 EngL2 Adv	6	11	17
FrL1 EngL2 Up Int	1	7	8
FrL1 EngL2 Low Int	1	-	1
Total	16	57	73

Direct perception

16

- Native speakers use few direct (visual) perception evidentials (EngL1=2, FrL1=4):
 - **LIN (FrL1) et on voit le petit chien qui est dehors devant sa niche*
 - **MIC (EngL1) erm# oh at the beginning we see a dog's kennel #*
- Advanced learners of English display a fairly high number of direct perception markers (6/17):
 - **MAX (FrL1 EngL2 Adv) at the beginning we see the dog*
 - **SAC (FrL1 EngL2 low Int) we can see the boy drinking some tea*
- We see: a form which is much less frequent in English . No « we can see » in EngL1 → influence of school grammar in France?

Inference FrL1

17

FrL1: Only 9 tokens, and 6 types

- **Semble (1/9)**
 - *Enfin ça semble être le matin*
- **On suppose (1/9)**
- **Il faut imaginer (1/9)**
- **Pourrait (1/9)**
 - *Ce qui pourrait être du sel ou du sable*
- **Apparemment (1/9)**
 - *Dans son peignoir apparemment tout sec*
- **Avoir l'air (2/9)**
 - *Ils ont l'air d'être copains*
- **Devoir (2/9)**
 - *La dame ça doit être sa petit maîtresse*

Inference EngL1 FrL2

18

- Only 5 tokens and 4 types:
 - Il a l'air
 - J'imagine (2/5)
 - On dirait le matin
 - Il a dû geler dans la nuit

→ Restricted use of evidential markers in conformity with target language patterns.

Inference EngL1

19

- 25 tokens, 8 types
- Seem (9/25)
 - *She seems to be having a good afternoon*
- Modals (6/25)
 - *Cause he sort of must have fallen over (2/6)*
 - *Then he might be able to pull her back to safety (4/6)*
- Adverbs (5/25)
 - *Drinking a cup of probably hot something (3/5)*
 - *Waking up presumably in the morning in his kennel (2/5)*
- Perception verbs (4/25)
 - *he looks very concerned (3/4)*
 - *Sounds like the ice is not going to be... (1/4)*
- I guess (1/25)

Inference FrL1 EngL2

20

- Variety increases with proficiency level (4 types at upper intermediate level, 5 types at advanced level)
 - I guess (8/18, including 1 « we can guess »)
 - Adverbs (4/18)
 - ✦ Apparently (3/4)
 - ✦ Presumably (1/4)
 - Modals (3/18)
 - ✦ May (2/3)
 - ✦ Might (1/3)
 - Seem (3/18)

Conclusion

21

- What evidential markers are used by French and English native speakers?
 - Inference > direct perception
 - Marked preference in English for seem to V, no marked preference in French
 - More types and tokens in the English data → evidentiality seems slightly more grammaticalised in English than in French
- What usage of evidential markers by learners of French and English?
 - Learners of French follow the TL pattern and use few evidentials
 - Learners of English use a fairly large quantity of evidentials, showing sensitivity to TL patterns; but their choice of markers differs from TL (we can see, I guess, apparently).

Conclusion

22

- At what stage do evidential markers appear in learner productions?
 - Higher level notion, only emerges at advanced level
 - Evidentiality is a metacognitive concept with a metalinguistic function (pervasive, but cognitively demanding)
- What does this tell us about the grammaticalization of evidential markers in French and English?
 - Grammaticalisation of evidentials slightly more advanced in English than in French
 - While advanced learners of English recognize the necessity to include evidential markers in their narratives, their choice of markers is influenced by their source language and / or second language instruction.
- Preliminary results, needs to be expanded

Merci !

23

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