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



TAM-E 2016 PARIS, NOVEMBER 18TH 2016

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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 underinvestigated (Squartini, Ed., 2007, and Diewald & Smirnova, Eds., 2010)

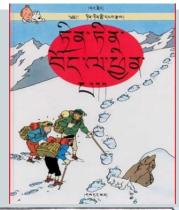
What is an 'evidential language'? The example of Tibetan

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- 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



- 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)



- 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)



- 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:

- o 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

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



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

Acquisition and grammaticalization

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



Our hypotheses

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

- o 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

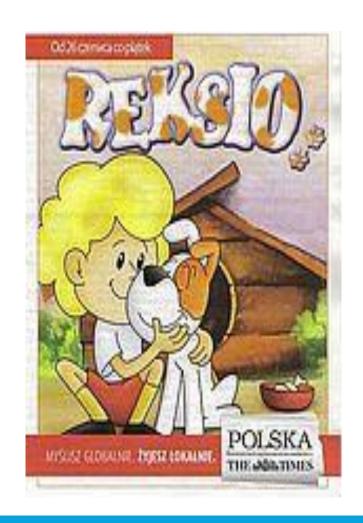
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- What evidential markers are used by French and English native speakers?
- What usage of evidential markers by learners of French and English?
 - At what stage do evidential markers appear in learner productions?
- What does this tell us about the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

Method: stimulus



- 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



Database:

- 10 native speakers of French (control group)
- 10 native speakers of English (control group)
- o 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

				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

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	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



	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



- 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



FrL1: Only 9 tokens, and 6 types

- Semble (1/9)
 - o Enfin ça semble être le matin
- On suppose (1/9)
- Il faut imaginer (1/9)
- Pourrait (1/9)
 - o 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



- Only 5 tokens and 4 types:
 - o Il a l'air
 - o J'imagine (2/5)
 - On dirait le matin
 - o Il a dû geler dans la nuit
- → Restricted use of evidential markers in conformity with target language patterns.

Inference EngL₁



- 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



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

Conclusion



- 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



- 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!



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