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Toward a typology of constative speech acts: Actions beyond evidentiality, epistemic modality, and factuality

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Abstract: The present study joins the long-running debate about the semantic–pragmatic distinction of the three domains of epistemic modality, evidentiality, and factuality. In particular, this work aims at providing both a theoretical and operational framework to investigate what type of speech act is at stake when a speaker/writer alternatively decides to mark a proposition as an epistemic modal, an evidential, or a factual construction. In fact, three basic types of illocutionary force will be shown to determine the modal marking of a constative speech act: evaluational ($EvF(p)$), presentative ($PrF(p)$), and assertive ($AsF(p)$) force. This classification is based on a set of tests that can effectively address either grammaticalized constructions or pragmatic strategies, independent from the specificity of the item under enquiry. This approach is first used to disentangle the controversial meaning of *MUST*-type predicates and then further theorized as a speech-act based framework of epistemic disambiguation.

Keywords: evidentiality, epistemic modality, factuality, illocutionary force, speech act

1 Introduction

This paper provides a theoretical discussion and an operational model offering new tools to disentangle the three semantic–pragmatic domains of epistemic modality, evidentiality, and factuality.

As a matter of fact, there is still lack of agreement concerning the semantic–pragmatic boundaries that need to be drawn between some inferential functions of evidentiality and the inferential/evaluational reasoning at the core of epistemic modality (e. g., Cornillie 2007 and Cornillie 2009; Mortelmans 2012; Nuyts 2001; Squartini 2008 and Squartini 2012). Similarly, not much has been achieved in clarifying the relationship between evidentiality and factuality, as the two

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categories are often considered to be semantically equivalent or mutually entailed (e. g., Willet 1988). This study aims to disentangle the three domains of evidentiality, epistemic modality, and factuality by looking at the illocutionary force of an utterance when a specific construction or pragmatic strategy is at stake. Compatibly with Reich's (2011, 2012) redefinition of speech acts in terms of overt influence attempts and overt co-act proposals (see Section 3), the present paper provides a set of criteria that can be applied to both grammatical constructions and pragmatic strategies so as to define more clearly the boundaries between the three aforementioned domains.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 serves as an introduction to the recent literature focusing on the distinction between evidentiality, epistemic modality, and factuality. Section 3 briefly outlines the theoretical framework that will be used in the rest of this study. Section 4 shows some problematic analyses and the lack of a generally applicable method of enquiry in the literature about evidentiality and epistemic modality. To achieve this, the whole section is focused on one of the most controversial constructions in the literature, the so-called *MUST*-type predicates. What will emerge from this analysis is a new model to disambiguate between the presentative, the evaluational, and the assertive illocutionary force of a constative speech act. This framework is further implemented in Section 5, where I address some potential counterexamples to the theory and extend its applicability to both grammaticalized items and pragmatic strategies.

All the novel examples of this paper have been included in a questionnaire given to 40 graduate native speakers of English and Italian, who were required to judge whether the expressions proposed could be considered idiomatic/meaningful or not (results are given as “Q_ (example number): x/40”).¹ In order to make sure that the respondents would be unaware of the subject matter of the study, new variations of utterances with a similar context (e. g., *apparently p* instead of *must p*) were given to a new group of students (again 40 graduate native speakers of English or Italian).

The statistical significance of the results from the questionnaire is calculated using the Fisher's exact test (see Pedersen 1996). Additionally, as this work is based on a set of illustrative examples from the most relevant literature on evidentials and epistemic modals, the results from the questionnaire will be further supported with corpus-based evidence from the *BNC* (British National Corpus) and the *itWaC* (Italian Web as a corpus).

¹ Q stands for “questionnaire.”

2 Epistemic modality, evidentiality, and factuality: Blurred lines

Epistemic modality, evidentiality, and factuality all have to do with the general notion of modality. The latter is broadly intended as the speaker's attitude toward what he or she says or, in other words, as the relationship between the speaker and his enunciation (Benveniste 1974 [1970]: 82).

More specifically, the state of affairs of a proposition is traditionally addressed in dichotomist terms: p is either factual or modal(ized). While modal expressions markedly problematize the intermediate space lying between the positive and the negative pole, such as between *do it* and *don't do it*, or *it is* and *it isn't* (e. g., Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 176), factuality refers to the state of affairs of a proposition posed as a fact, viz., something truly happening in the real world. In the literature, the same concept is labeled in different ways: notions such as *realis* (e. g., Mithun 1999; Palmer 2001); factuality, factivity, reality, and actuality (e. g., Chung and Timberlake 1985; Kiparsky and Kiparsky 1971; Papafragou 2000; Squartini 2009 and Squartini 2012; Tantucci 2015a); and validity (Dietrich 1992) all in a way or another refer to the same idea. Narrog (2005, 2009, 2012) stresses the dichotomy between factuality and modality as he defines the latter as the domain marking the nonfactuality or “undetermined-factuality” of an event (Narrog 2005: 187). Beyond this primary distinction – traditionally, albeit not universally endorsed (e. g., Squartini 2008 and Squartini 2012) – modal(ized) propositions are further divided into epistemic modals and evidentials.

Namely, epistemic modality is defined as “the evaluation of the chances that a certain hypothetical state of affairs under consideration (or some aspect of it) will occur, is occurring or has occurred in a possible world” (Nuyts 2001: 21). Conversely, evidentiality is alternatively said to refer to “the existence of a source of evidence for some information” (Aikhenvald 2004: 1), the “encoding of the speaker's (type of) grounds for making a speech act” (Faller 2002: 2), or the communication of a piece of “acquired knowledge” (Tantucci 2013: 214). Evidentiality in English does not constitute a grammatical category and is generally communicated through adverbials or discourse markers such as *apparently* and *allegedly* (see Mushin 2001: 54; Narrog 2009: 10), predicates conveying an evidential meaning such as *it seems that*, *it appears that*, and *I saw that*, pragmatic strategies (see Aikhenvald 2004), or overtly expressed contextual elements providing some type of information.

The growing interest in the concept of evidentiality in recent years has opened new debates about the relationship between the two submodal domains of

evidentiality and epistemic modality. Nonetheless, van der Auwera and Ammann (2005: 307) lament that much of the controversies in the recent literature ended up blurring the traditional borders of the two domains. Squartini (2012: 2116) notes the attempts made “to pin down those epistemic functions in which epistemicity and evidentiality overlap” (e. g., Palmer 2001), as new distinctions between evidential functions (Kronning 2003; Pietrandrea 2005; Squartini 2009) and pure epistemic modal constructions have been proposed.

After earlier pioneering studies focusing on grammaticalized evidential systems of the languages of North and South America, Tibetan, Japanese, languages of the Balkan area, and Turkic and Iranian languages (e. g., Aikhenvald 2004; Chafe and Nichols 1986; Johanson and Utas 2000; Willett 1988), a new interest has been growing around evidential strategies and constructions in Romance and Germanic languages (Diewald and Smirnova 2010; de Haan 1999 and de Haan 2001; Mortelmans 2000) with the common cause of disentangling epistemic modal and evidential functions (e. g., Boye 2012; Cornillie 2007 and Cornillie 2009; Nuyts 2009 and Nuyts 2012; Plungian 2001; Sbisà 2014; Squartini 2008 and Squartini 2012). Nonetheless, despite most of the efforts made, the present literature is still lacking an operational model that could equally address highly grammaticalized constructions as well as pragmatic strategies aimed at conveying either an evidential, an epistemic modal, or a factual meaning.

To achieve this, the present study will initially focus on what is probably the most debated and controversial construction in the recent literature on evidentiality and epistemic modality: the so-called *MUST*-type predicates (e. g., Cornillie 2009; Diewald 2000; Goossens 2001; de Haan 2001; Squartini 2008). The criteria that I will adopt through the analysis of crosslinguistic data from the recent literature will serve as the basis for a new taxonomy of constative speech acts, viz., the ones traditionally intended to be “aimed at information transmission” (Kissine 2013: 3), such as assertions, testimonies, conjectures, evaluations, and so on. In this sense, it is important to note that in the specific literature of evidentials and epistemic modals, not much attention has been paid to the specific social action that is performed beyond a modalized proposition.²

The final aim of this study will be to ultimately distinguish between constative speech acts carrying three basic types of illocutionary force (in the sense of Searle 1969): evaluational ($EvF(p)$), presentative ($PrF(p)$) (this notion is first proposed in Faller 2002), and assertive ($AsF(p)$).³ What will emerge from this classification is a pragmatic account of what the SP/W (speaker/writer)

² A notable exception is represented by the distinction between assertive and presentative speech acts proposed by Faller (2002); see also Ifantidou (2001) and Sbisà (2014).

³ See Jary (2010) and Kissine (2013) for a detailed treatment of assertions.

purposely decides to do when s/he marks a constative speech act in a particular way rather than another. The methodology of this work will be then centered on the relationship between the modal marking of a proposition and the social action that the SP/W intends to perform.

3 Constative speech acts as overt influence attempts

From a theoretical point of view, the present study is compatible with the view of constative speech acts as overt influence attempts, or OIAs, proposed by Reich (2011, 2012), according to which communicative acts are to be intended “as proposals or requests for the addressee to carry out a cooperative response,” with a special focus on “how the agency of addressees is implied by the performance of many communicative acts” (Reich 2011: 1349)

While the traditional Austinian-Searlean model of communicative acts (see Austin 1962; Searle 1969; Searle and Vanderveken 1985) assumes that communication is fundamentally aimed at sharing meanings, quite differently, the OIA model is grounded in evolutionary theory, emphasizing the purpose of making co-act proposals (CAPs) with the ultimate aim of exerting social influence. In this respect, it is held that the Austinian-Searlean model “misses [...] the way in which a speaker [...] uses an overtly intentional signal to solicit cooperation from a hearer (addressee)” (Reich 2011: 1350).

Based on the redefinition of speech acts as OIAs, this study proposes a taxonomy of constatives in which the illocutionary force of a statement corresponds to SP/W’s attempt to perform three types of actions: presentation, evaluation, and assertion. As will be discussed, the prototypical perlocutionary effects (see Searle 1969) of a presentative speech act are obtained through SP/W’s OIA of resulting reliable/trustworthy to AD/R’s (addressee/reader’s) eyes.⁴ Conversely, evaluational speech acts are performed with the intention of inducing AD/R to consider SP/W’s reasoning process about the truthfulness of *p*. Finally, assertive speech acts are cooperatively aimed at establishing or maintaining a proposition as a fact to be acknowledged by AD/R. That being said, despite the OIA/CAP-oriented approach to speech events of this study, the three

⁴ Presentative type of co-act proposals are in fact ““on record” and targeted, addressees control essential aspects of their behavioral response to them, and there are external mechanisms (norms etc.) that frequently guarantee addressees who cooperate with signalers (or signalers who offer help to addressees) a reward at a later point in time” (Reich 2011: 1356).

notions of presentation, evaluation, and assertion will be still addressed with the more familiar term of speech acts (instead of the novel label of CAP).

4 The *MUST*-type modal verbs

We can now start with a detailed analysis of *MUST*-type modal verbs and how have they been approached in the recent literature. After pointing out some problematic intuitions and possible contradictions among different treatments, I will address the same phenomenon from a speech act-oriented perspective.

4.1 The Italian *MUST*-type *dovere*

Squartini (2008, 2012) opens an interesting discussion as to whether the source of evidence for a modalized proposition is OTHER oriented rather than SELF oriented – that is, internal or external source with respect to the speaker. He further distinguishes between three types of evidential inference: circumstantial inferences, generic inferences (based on general knowledge), and conjectures (respectively given in examples (1)–(3) below).

According to Squartini, Italian *dovere* and French *devoir* intersect with only two kinds of inferences: external evidence inferences and general knowledge inferences. On the other hand, he claims that inferences of the conjectural type are not allowed. For inferences of the latter type, the so-called conjectural future needs to be used instead (see Squartini 2012: 2117 on the “claimed” evidential meaning of conjectures):

- (1) [*Indicando un ragno.*]
*Attento, **deve essere** ancora vivo, perché ho visto che si muove.*
 [“Pointing to a spider.”]
 “Be careful! It must still be alive, for I saw it moving.”
- (2) [*Suonano alla porta.*]
***Deve essere** il postino.*
 [“The doorbell rings.”]
 “It must be the postman.”
- (3) [*Suonano alla porta.*]
*Non aspettavo nessuno; ***deve essere/sarà** Gianni.*
 [“The doorbell rings.”]
 “I was not expecting anybody.” * “It must/will be Gianni.”

First of all, it needs to be observed that the examples above are construed with the aim of being contextually based on (or rather “surrounded by”) some evidence, viz, what Squartini defines as external evidence, general knowledge, and conjectural evidence.⁵ In other words, the utterances in (1)–(3) imply evidence precisely due to the physical and/or contextual information provided by the author in each example. This would clearly not be a problem if such preparatory conditions – that is, the necessary and sufficient conditions for the successful performance of illocutionary acts (see Searle 1969) – would specifically determine the usage of the “supposedly evidential” *dovere* at the expenses of other nonevidential constructions or strategies. However, this does not seem to be the case as all the constraints we encounter with employment of *dovere* are the same with either epistemic modal constructions such as *potrebbe* “could/may/might” or the epistemic predicate (*io*) *penso* “I think”, but also with modally *unmarked factual assertions*.

We can test this first with the epistemic modal predicate (*io*) *penso* “I think”:

- (4) [*Indicando un ragno.*]
Attento, penso che sia ancora vivo, perché ho visto che si muove.
 [“Pointing to a spider.”]
 “Be careful! I think it’s still alive, for I saw it moving.”
- (5) [*Suonano alla porta.*]
Penso che sia il postino.
 [“The doorbell rings.”]
 “I think that’s the postman.”
- (6) [*Suonano alla porta.*]
Non aspettavo nessuno.??Penso che sia Gianni/sarà Gianni.
 [“The doorbell rings.”]
 “I was not expecting anybody.”?? “I think it is/will be Gianni.”

As can be noted, the same limitations encountered for *dovere* are found with the employment of the epistemic modal predicate (*io*) *penso* “I think”. The latter is commonly agreed to be a prototypical function of epistemic modality (e. g.,

⁵ In Squartini’s account, the latter may only be conveyed with the future as a marker of inferences that are based solely on the SP/W’s own reasoning, thus excluding any form of external evidence. As result, he maintains, “conjectures are necessarily more subjective and therefore compatible with a reduction of the speaker’s commitment” (Squartini 2012: 2117). Ultimately, the reason why *dovere* is not acceptable in (3) is claimed to be induced by the logical and pragmatic expectation of the SP/W’s low commitment to the truthfulness of the proposition.

Nuyts 2001; Tantucci 2015a; Traugott 1995), as it expresses the “evaluation of the chances that a certain hypothetical state of affairs [...] will occur, is occurring or has occurred” (Nuyts 2001: 21). As a matter of fact, all information providing evidence for the statements in (1)–(6) is either additionally given as contextual elements (e. g., *the doorbell rings*) or as assertive clarifications of the SP/W, precisely with the aim of giving substance to the utterance (e. g., *for I saw it moving*). Such additional contextual elements crucially affect – to an equal degree – the acceptability of both the employment of the *MUST*-type verb *dovere* and to the one of (*io penso* “I think”).

Most interestingly, even though in the case of (3), the use of *dovere* is more problematic, the epistemic modal (*io penso* “I think” in (6) shows the same limitations. In fact, while Squartini correctly claims that in (3) the Italian conjectural future is more felicitous than *dovere*, the same applies to (*io penso* “I think” in (6) when replaced by the same construction.

To briefly summarize the main points raised so far, Squartini defines *dovere* as an evidential construction that can express two forms of inference: external and inference deriving from general knowledge.⁶ He argues this by showing the compatibility of *dovere* in contexts where either external evidence or general knowledge are expressed. On the other hand, he emphasizes, *dovere* is not felicitous in contexts of speaker-oriented conjecture, in which the SP/W is “solely responsible for the reasoning process” (Squartini 2008: 925).

What I show above is that such unequivocal “compatibility” with contexts having to do with some external evidence or general knowledge is equally matched by a prototypical epistemic modal construction such as (*io penso* “I think”). Additionally, it also needs to be considered that the different semantics encoded by the future tense in (3) and (6) may regard a varying gradience of SP/W’s commitment rather than the grammaticality of the proposition. In fact, while the discussion from this section is purposely based on the “intuitive” criteria originally provided in Squartini (2008), corpus evidence from the *itWaC* (Italian Web as a Corpus; see Baroni et al. 2009) suggests that *dovere* and the conjectural future are often interchangeable in contexts of external evidence.⁷ Crucially, the present work aims at providing new operational tools to empirically address semantic puzzles as such.

⁶ The latter is said to refer to Aikhenvald’s (2004) category of assumed evidentiality.

⁷ From two random samples of 100 occurrences of the epistemic usage of *dovere* (see Hoffmann et al. 2008 on corpus sampling): Text 0067e0: Context [in the belly of the fish the heart of another fish has been found] *Questo pesce deve essere proprio uno spazzino* “This fish must really be a street cleaner.” The expression is also acceptable with the conjectural future: *Questo pesce sarà proprio uno spazzino*.

4.1.1 *Dovere* versus *potere*

A similar case is constituted by the modal verb of epistemic possibility *potere* “could/might/may” (encoded as *potrebbe* in the conditional mood). As shown below, *potrebbe* implies evidentiality (i. e., inference from external evidence, general knowledge) as much as *dovere* and (*io*) *penso* do in the same context:

- (7) [*Indicando un ragno.*]
Attento, potrebbe essere ancora vivo, (perché) ho visto che si muove.
 [“Pointing to a spider.”]
 “Be careful! It may be still alive, for I saw it moving.”
- (8) [*Suonano alla porta.*]
Potrebbe essere il postino.
 [“The doorbell rings.”]
 “It might be the postman.”
- (9) [*Suonano alla porta.*]
Non aspettavo nessuno. Potrebbe essere Gianni/sarà Gianni.
 [“The doorbell rings.”]
 “I was not expecting anybody. It may be/will be Gianni.”

As can be observed, the epistemic modal *potere* “may/could” – which in the literature is commonly assumed not to convey evidentiality – is acceptable in all the contexts where *dovere* is expected to function as an evidential, as in both (7) and (8) *potrebbe* implies evidence as much as *must* does in (5) and (6).⁸

Concerning the equal status of *dovere* and *potere* in the given contexts, we should bear in mind that neither *dovere* nor *potrebbe* conveys factuality (see Narrog 2005: 187 about the nonfactual status of modalized constructions), as both (1) and (7) are easily defeasible by SP/W him/herself (Q₋ (1a): 40/40; (7a): 40/40):⁹

- (1) a. *Attento, deve essere ancora vivo, anche se non ne sono sicuro.*
 “Be careful! It must still be alive, although I am not sure...”

⁸ In (9) the epistemic modal *potere* is acceptable as it expresses a comparatively lower commitment to the evaluation, which can clearly map the meaning of a conjecture.

⁹ The string reads as follows: in the questionnaire Q₋, 40 graduate native speakers out of 40 (40/40) judged the contextualized utterance in (1a) as a natural utterance in the sense of being logical, easy to process, and noncontradictory; 40 graduate native speakers out of 40 (40/40) judged the contextualized utterance in (7a) as a natural utterance in the sense of being logical, easy to process, and noncontradictory.

- (7) a. Attento, potrebbe essere ancora vivo, anche se non ne sono sicuro.
 “Be careful! It may/might/could still be alive, although I am not sure...”

On questionnaire Q₁, 40 respondents answered a question preceded by a statement giving basic contextual information about the utterance:

[The speaker points to a still spider on the ground]. S/he utters: (x). Does his/her speech sound logical and easy to process to you? Answer “yes” or “no”.

As expected, 40 out of 40 respondents answered positively to both statements. On the other hand, neither *dovere* nor *potrebbe* can be defeated if the SP/W’s own evaluation is addressed instead (Q₁ (1b): 1/40; (7b): 6/40):

- (1) *b. Attento, deve essere ancora vivo, *anche se io non la penso così.
 “Be careful! It must still be alive, although I don’t think so...”
- (7) *b. Attento, potrebbe essere ancora vivo, *anche se io non la penso così.
 “Be careful! It may/might/could still be alive, although I don’t think so...”

From above it emerges that both *dovere* and *potere* markedly express SP/W’s evaluation (1b)–(7b) and do not mark *p* as factual ((1a) (*1b), $p < 0.0001$; (7a) (*7b), $p < 0.0001$).¹⁰ Corpus evidence from the *BNC* confirms this fact: Within the window -6 to -1 , *must* occurs 471 times followed by *though*, *although*, *however*, and *nonetheless*, but no cases are found in which SP/W subsequently questions his/her own reasoning process. Crucially, if *dovere* were to be considered as an evidential, it should then allow SP/W to carry information independently from his/her own additional evaluations. However, as shown in (1b), the two are not semantically/pragmatically detached from one another.

Conversely, things change with the employment of a prototypical evidential construction such as *parere* “it seems”, conveying either reportivity or inferentiality (see Ramat 1996: 293; Lazard 2000: 214; a similar test is provided in Cornillie 2007 and Cornillie 2009: 52 about the Spanish *parecer*; Q₁ (12): 39/40):

- (10) *Pare che sia ancora vivo, anche se io non la penso così.*
 “It seems that it is still alive, although I don’t think so ...”

¹⁰ The mismatch between the positive answers in (1a) and (1b) is statistically significant, $p < 0.0001$; the mismatch between the positive answers in (7a) and (7b) is statistically significant, $p < 0.0001$.

As can be noted, when the proposition is evidentially marked with *parere*, it is then perfectly compatible with a separate evaluation made by SP/W. In fact, the employment of *parere* in (10) changes the preparatory conditions of the utterance, now significantly judged as acceptable by the respondents ((*1b) (10), $p < 0.0001$; (*7b) (10), $p < 0.0001$). Namely, SP/W no more states that *the spider is alive* as a result of an evaluation. Rather, the proposition in (10) is posited as a piece of acquired knowledge, which can either correspond to hearsay, or what “people” inferred or may infer from some evidence.

Different from *dovere* “must”, *sembrare* “seem” does not carry an independent “evaluational force” (EvF(p)), which is inherent in any form of (inter-)subjective evaluation: SP/W either evaluates p as an individual or takes part in a “shared evaluation.” By contrast, *parere* simply encodes a piece of information which is presented (PrF(p)) to AD/R, without any “evaluational” involvement on behalf of SP/W (see Fallier 2002 as she first elaborates the notion of presentative speech acts). Simply put, I treat epistemic modality and evidentiality as marked indicators of two different “social actions”: respectively evaluation vs. presentation (see Wilson 2011: 21–24 for an overview of procedural vs. conceptual meaning). This claim is supported by the fact that out of two random samples of 100 occurrences of the impersonal usage of *pare che* from the *itWaC*, there are no cases where *pare che p* cannot be felicitously parsed with *anche se non la penso così* “although I don’t think so”.¹¹

4.1.2 *Dovere* vs factual assertions

Finally, the same contextual limitations encountered with *dovere*, (*io*) *penso*, and *potrebbe* are also valid for modally unmarked factual assertions:

- (11) [*Indicando un ragno.*]
Attento è ancora vivo, (perché) ho visto che si muove.
 [“Pointing to a spider.”]
 “Be careful! It’s alive, (for) I saw it moving.”

¹¹ For example, 0000f5 *Pare che cittadini polacchi siano coinvolti sempre più nel traffico di amfetamine [anche se personalmente non penso che sia vero]* “It seems that some Polish citizens are increasingly involved in the traffic of amphetamines [although personally I don’t think this is actually true].” On the other hand, the mere acquiring of this piece of information cannot be questioned by SP/W him/herself: *Pare che cittadini polacchi siano coinvolti sempre più nel traffico di amfetamine [*anche se non ho saputo di ciò]* “It seems that some Polish citizens are increasingly involved in the traffic of amphetamines [*although I haven’t got to know about this].”

- (12) [*Suonano alla porta.*]
E' il postino.
 ["The doorbell rings."]
 "That's the postman."
- (13) [*Suonano alla porta.*]
Non aspettavo nessuno.??E' Gianni/sarà Gianni.
 ["The doorbell rings."]
 "I was not expecting anybody.??" "It is/will be Gianni."

From examples (11)–(13) we can note that even modally unmarked factual assertions are equally acceptable in the overtly given contexts of (11) and (12), as well as infelicitous in (13).

From the data discussed so far, the following conclusion can be drawn:

When external (circumstantial) evidence and/or general knowledge are contextually/overtly given, whatever the modal marking of a statement among the ones considered (viz., factual, epistemic modal, evidential), there are no semantic or grammatical constraints at stake: the proposition is always acceptable.

As a result, there seems to be no reason to consider *dovere* more evidential, or rather, less epistemic modal than (*io*) *penso* "I think" or *potrebbe* "may/might/could".

4.2 MUST-type in English and the notion of evaluational distancing

Similar to Squartini, Cornillie (2009: 50) comments on the inferential reading of the English *must* and distinguishes between circumstantial, generic and conjectured inferences.

The one below is argued to be an example of circumstantial inference, matching (1) proposed by Squartini:

- (14) *There is a wounded dog lying on the other side of the street. It **must** be in pain.*

Cornillie observes that in (14) SP/W "believes that their own assessment of the state of affairs, i. e. *that a wounded dog lying on the street* is in pain, is likely to be true" (2009: 50). He further argues that both constructions of weak and strong degree of certainty "do not differ from generic inferential readings":

- (15) *There is a wounded dog lying on the other side of the street. It **may** be in pain.*

However, according to Cornillie, “it goes without saying that the evidential dimension is more prominently present in epistemic *must/moeten* than in epistemic *may/kunnen*” (Cornillie 2009: 55), as the former is claimed to undergo a diachronic shift from deontic modality to evidential modality. At this point, as we did for the Italian examples given by Squartini, we may reverse Cornillie’s observation by pointing out that there is also no empirical criterion to support an evidential interpretation either for *must* or for *may*. In fact, even a factual assertion is perfectly acceptable in the same context (Q_ (18): 40/40):

(16) There is a wounded dog lying on the other side of the street. It’s in pain.

As already discussed, when inferences from circumstantial evidence are overtly/contextually expressed, a proposition implies evidentiality no matter what the modal marking of the following statements (i. e., *must*, *may* or *unmarked factual assertions*). That is, the implied evidential meaning in (14)–(16) is precisely given by that contextual indication that *There is a wounded dog lying on the other side of the street*. Due to this contextual information, any subsequent comment made by SP/W will – in one way or another – logically imply an inference drawn from some circumstantial evidence, and thus unmistakably fit into the category of circumstantial evidentiality.

On the other hand, it is possible to find operational criteria to show that *must* in (14) carries an evaluational force ($EvF(p)$) rather than a presentative one ($PrF(p)$). To do so, it is necessary to draw from Nuyts (2009), who – applying Chafe’s (1994) claim of one idea per intonation unit – argues for the cognitive implausibility of combining more than one modal qualification per clause. This is easily assessed by separating SP/W’s evaluation, from the evidence s/he provides (Q_ (17): 36/40; (18): 38/40):

(17) ***It seems that there is a wounded dog lying on the other side of the street. Apparently it’s in pain, and I also think so.***

(18) ***It seems that there is a wounded dog lying on the other side of the street. Apparently it’s in pain, though I don’t think so.***

As can be seen in (17) and (18), when the two speech acts (presentative and evaluational) are expressed as a separate intonation units, the resulting evaluation is idiomatic and easily processed.¹²

¹² In fact, SP/W may either refer to some deceiving appearance of the dog’s state (i. e., *it looks like it’s in pain, but personally I don’t think so*), to some reportative interpretation (i. e., SP/W

I define this operation as evaluational distancing, namely:

the possibility on behalf of SP/W to make a subjective evaluation with regard to a piece of information s/he provides.

This will turn out to be an effective criterion to judge whether SP/W is merely “presenting” a piece of information to AD/R, or whether s/he rather takes part in an evaluational process (which can be either subjective or jointly intersubjective). As a result of this, a general dual axiom can be drawn about the intersection between assertive/presentative force and assertive/negative polarity:

- (19) a. $EvF(p) + EvF(-p) \vdash \perp$
 b. $PrF(p) + EvF(-p) \nmid \perp$

The two formulas in (19) read as follows:

- a. *An evaluational speech act $EvF(p)$ immediately followed by an evaluational speech act $EvF(-p)$ leads (–) to contradiction (\perp).*
 b. *A presentative speech act $PrF(p)$ immediately followed by an evaluational speech act $EvF(-p)$ does not lead (+) to contradiction (\perp).*

In fact, when a presentative speech act is realized, a consequent negative evaluation about the state of affairs of p is possible. On the other hand, an evaluational speech act $EvF(p)$ does not logically allow a consequent negative evaluation of the state of affairs of p $EvF(-p)$. Based on this, it is easily proved that *must* shows a distinct tendency to carry evaluational force, not allowing a subsequent negative evaluational distancing (Q_ (20): 2/40):¹³

- (20) There is a wounded dog lying on the other side of the street. **It must** be in pain, ***though I don’t think so.**

Given these points, a crucial question that seems to have been partly neglected in the literature is how – rather than when – evidence can be referred to in language. As pointed out by Plungian (2001: 254), “evidence is always inherently present in epistemic meaning.” Similarly, Nuyts emphasizes that “in principle, without any evidence one cannot evaluate the probability of the state

heard someone saying that the dog is in pain) or to some circumstantial evidence from which the inference p may be drawn (i. e., SP/W refers to what might be inferred from noticing that someone is hurriedly approaching the dog to check whether it is suffering).

¹³ It was markedly excluded from the questionnaire the possibility of an afterthought or a second thought after the first evaluation: that is, *it must be p ... actually, no I don’t think so anymore.*

of affairs: one can then only say that one does not know” (2001: 34). Indeed, communication is not possible without some evidence either being overtly expressed or covertly implied. However, this clearly cannot entail that every utterance we pronounce is – in one way or another – an evidential construction. Where do the boundaries need to be drawn then?

The only way out – I claim here and further maintain in the rest of this work – is to look at the illocutionary force of a constative speech act: What are we doing when we mark a statement in a way or another? Do our actions change?

As far as this discussion is showing, the main aim of this study is to demonstrate that they do, and that the categories of evidentiality, epistemic modality and factuality crucially intersect with the encoding of three different subtypes of constative speech acts: presentative (see Faller 2002), evaluational and assertive.

4.3 MUST-type in German and Dutch

This subsection is centered on the claimed evidential status of *MUST*-type predicates in German and Dutch. The German *müssen* is discussed in Diewald (1999: 215 ff.) as a construction of probability, certainty and conviction. Salkie (2002) also presents a contrastive (English–German) corpus-based account of the modals *must* and *should*, arguing that English epistemic *must* cannot refer to future states of affairs, whereas German epistemic *müssen* can (2002: 93). Quite differently, de Haan (2001, 2009, 2010) stresses that the Dutch *moeten* simply asserts that there is (indirect) evidence for the statement made, without drawing any conclusions from it. Conversely, he refers to the English nonroot *must* as merely “evaluative.” De Haan’s position is explicitly questioned by Narrog (2010: 119), who reinforces the idea of an evidential (inferential) interpretation of the English *must*. Similarly, based on a self-compiled English–Dutch–German translation corpus of fictional texts, Mortelmans (2012) proposes that *must* tends to be translated into by *moeten* and/or *müssen* when referring “to the contextual presence of external evidence, upon which the inference is based” (2012: 2157). With this she holds that the Dutch and German cognates of *must* are evidentials of inference based either on circumstantial or general knowledge (Mortelmans 2012: 2157):

- (21) ENG “Somebody **must** have buried the body”, I said.
 DUT “Iemand **moet** het lijk begraven hebben”, zei ik.
 GER “Jemand **muß** die Leiche vergraben haben”, sagte ich.

Mortelmans argues that in (21) the SP/W makes a conclusion “upon finding a body that clearly has been buried (it was found underneath a barbeque)”

(2012: 2157). While this is undoubtedly true, however, despite the contextual indications of some external evidence, neither *moet* or *muß* can be felicitously detached from SP/W's separate evaluation; that is, they do not allow an evaluational distancing from the statement ($\text{Ev}F(p) + \text{Ev}F(\neg p) \vdash \perp$):

- (21) ENG *a. "Somebody **must** have buried the body", ***though I don't think so.** (Q_ (29a): 2/40)
 DUT *a. Iemand **moet** het lijk begraven hebben, ***maar ik denk niet dat dat klopt.**
 GER *a. Jemand **muß** die Leiche vergraben haben, ***obwohl ich nicht glaube, dass.**

On the other hand, some evaluational distancing is possible if the evidence is simply provided (presented), without an epistemic modal (viz., evaluational) involvement of SP/W ($\text{Pr}F(\neg p) + \text{Ev}F(p) \nvdash \perp$):

- (22) ENG b. **Apparently**, somebody have buried the body, though I don't think so. (Q_ (30b): 37/40)
 DUT b. **Schijnaar** heeft iemand het lijk begraven, maar ik denk niet dat dat klopt.
 GER b. **Es scheint**, jemand hat die Leiche vergraben. Aber ich glaube nicht, dass das der Fall ist.

Finally, a most interesting case from Mortelmans's corpus survey is the following example: "In this particular passage, the speaker [...] is being carried away and confesses that he has murdered someone [...]. On realizing what he has been saying, [he] tries to correct himself and create the impression that his victim did not die from the beating, but from a weak heart" (Mortelmans 2012: 2158):

- (23) ENG *And the long and the short of it is I loses my head which is a thing I never ought to a done with the worry of them photos an all. And I hits him. I hits him. Pause. He **must** have had a weak heart.* (ORT, 125)
 DUT *enfin ik verlies m'n verstand, wa 'k normaal nie zou doen moest ik nie met die foto's in m'ne kop zitten. En ik sloeg 'm. Ik sloeg 'm. Hij **moet** een zwak hart gehad hebben.* (ORT, Manuscript)
 GER *Und um es kurz zu machen: ich verliere den Kopf, das hätte mir nicht passieren dürfen, aus Angst vor den Fotos und alldem. Und ich schlage zu. Schlage zu. Pause. Er **muß** ein schwaches Herz gehabt haben.* (ORT, manuscript)

The first point to be made is that, as expected, an evaluational distancing is not possible in none of the three languages:

- (23) ENG *a. [...] He **must** have had a weak heart, ***but I don't think so.** (Q_31a): 2/40)
- DUT *a. [...] Hij **moet** een zwak hart gehad hebben, ***maar ik denk niet dat dat klopt.**
- GER *a. [...] Er **muß** ein schwaches Herz gehabt haben, ***obwohl ich nicht glaube, dass das der Fall ist/war.**

Most crucially, the evaluational force of *must* is confirmed contextually by the OIA of SP/W in (23), the perlocutionary effects of which are the ones of convincing/persuading AD/R that he is not the murderer. In a similar example considered in Reich (2011), a shoplifter has just been stopped and handcuffed by a police officer. At that point, the shoplifter tries to protest her innocence. According to Reich, in so doing, not only does she “want the officer to acquire a belief, she also wants to affect the course of the interaction and be released” (2011: 1357). Similarly, by uttering *He must have had a weak heart* in (23), SP/W is far from presenting to AD/R a piece of information s/he acquired from the external world, or in other words, s/he is not merely informing AD/R of *p*. Rather, s/he is engaging AD/R in a cooperative act of evaluation of the state of affairs of *p* (as a CAP), with the aim of persuading AD/R that s/he is not guilty (as its perlocutionary effects).

As we discussed in Section 2, the prototypical OIA of evidential constructions or strategies is to act as a reliable individual who can be trusted in future “overt cooperative attempts.” Conversely, the OIA of an epistemic modal statement is to engage AD/R in the cooperative activity of evaluating the truthfulness of *p*, as the usage of *must* in (23) so clearly exemplifies.

5 Toward a taxonomy of constatives: Pragmatic distinctions

Based on the analysis in Section 4, this final section consolidates the present model as it further distinguishes evaluations from evidential inference (Section 5.1), evaluations from concessives (Section 5.2), and evaluational distancing from factual distancing (Section 5.3).

5.1 Evaluation versus evidential inference

As discussed in Lazard (1999, 2001; see also Mushin 2001; Tantucci 2013 and Tantucci 2015c), indirect evidential constructions merging together reportative,

inferential, and mirative¹⁴ meanings are felicitously paraphrased as *apparently*, *it seems*, and *as it appears*. This type of evidential function is referred to in different ways. It is defined as indirective (Johanson 2003) and nonconfirmative (Aronson 1967; Friedman 2003). It is said to belong to the A2 subcategory – that is, indirect knowledge corresponding to a separated marked function – in Aikhenvald's (2004) typological classification. Comparatively, in Lazard (1999, 2001), Guentchéva (1996), and Guentchéva and Londaburu (2007), the term *mediativity* is adopted. Finally, in Tantucci (2013, 2015b) the pragmatic notion of interpersonal evidentiality (IE) is used to address similar phenomena and their grammaticalized equivalents in Mandarin and other Sinitic languages.

Those scholars who argue for an evidential reading of the so-called *MUST*-type verbs more or less explicitly base their argumentation on either the reportative or the inferential usages of the *said* verb type. In other words, as the aforementioned grammaticalized evidential systems are said to convey either evidential reportativity or inferentiality, a similar space on an ideal semantic map (see Anderson 1986; van der Auwera and Plungian 1998; Plungian 2001) has been argued to be occupied by the reportative, inferential, and conjectural readings of *MUST*-type verbs.

While this may seem a fair reason to classify *MUST*-type verbs as proper evidential constructions, there are two fundamental aspects of the latter which have been partly neglected or not fully exploited:

- a. subjective vs. intersubjective evaluation
- b. illocutionary force

Similar to what Squartini points out about the mode of knowing, Nuyts distinguishes between subjective and intersubjective qualification of a modal evaluation (2012: 58):

A modal evaluation is subjective if it is presented as being strictly the assessor's sole responsibility. A modal evaluation is "intersubjective" if it is presented as being shared between the assessor and a wider group of people, possibly (but not necessarily) including the hearer.

I propose that this definition should intersect with both points (a) and (b) above. In fact, although evaluations may be subjective or intersubjective (shared), nonetheless, to be considered as such, they always need to carry an evaluational force, $EvF(p)$. The evaluational force of an utterance is subjective when SP/W alone evaluates the truthfulness of p . On the other hand, it is intersubjective when SP/W joins a shared evaluation about the truthfulness of p .

¹⁴ Mirativity as a typological category encodes the speaker's surprise or the unpreparedness of their mind (e. g., DeLancey 1997 and DeLancey 2001).

This entails that when a statement is marked (linguistically or multimodally) as an evaluation, it prototypically maps the semantic structure of epistemic modality, as the latter is well known to literally regard the “evaluation of the probability of the state of affairs” (Nuyts 2001: 21). On the other hand, when SP/W merely “presents” evaluations/inferences made by others to AD/R (e. g., *it is believed that p* or *people think that p*), then SP/W is doing nothing but informing AD/R of a piece of evidence. In this latter case, the prototypical characteristic of the domain of evidentiality is constituted by the presentative force $PrF(p)$ of an utterance, viz, the mere speech act of informing AD/R of a piece of knowledge that SP/W has markedly acquired somehow. As matter of fact, any function of evidentiality – be it visual, auditory, based on hearsay, IE, inferential, and so on – is inherently conducive to the realization of a presentative speech act and is thus always open to the evaluational distancing on behalf of SP/W.

This disambiguation can then be completely explicated by answering the following question: Can evaluations contextually imply some external evidence?

They truly can, but only as a result of a conversational implicature, viz. not independently carrying a presentative force. This is precisely the reason why many scholars have been drawn to the idea that *MUST*-type predicates are to be considered as evidential constructions.

Simply put, a piece of evidence can be either overtly communicated or barely implied: While a presentative speech act is optimally relevant (see Sperber and Wilson 1995; Wilson and Sperber 2012) if it communicates the existence of a piece of acquired information/knowledge, quite differently, an evaluational speech act finds its optimal relevance in the subjective or shared evaluation of some state of affairs.¹⁵ Clearly, evaluations, to different degrees, will always imply some evidence upon which the utterance is based, thus functioning as “evidential triggers,” so to speak. However, the core meaning of an evaluation is to engage AD/R in SP/W’s reasoning process, not the one of providing information.

Consider the famous example given by Slobin and Aksu about the grammaticalized mediative marker *-miş* in Turkish (1982: 187):

¹⁵ Different from Reich, this study regards the presumption of optimal relevance (see Sperber and Wilson 1995; Wilson and Sperber 2012) as a pragmatic mechanism that is precisely motivated by OIAs. Namely, if SP/W wants to influence AD/R in thinking/acting in a cooperative manner – this is the fundamental assumption of OIA’s theory – then SP/W will need to posit *p* in a way that is both relevant/advantageous for his/her purpose and that is also considered relevant/advantageous for the purposes of AD/R, so that AD/R will then have a reason to act cooperatively (e. g., executing an order, believing a statement and so on). This simply entails that, from a neo-Darwinian perspective, what is relevant can be fairly considered equal to what is advantageous.

- (24) *Kemal gel-miş*
 Kemal come-IND
 “Kemal came (as it appears)”

In (24) above, the inflectional marker *-miş* corresponds to a grammaticalized evidential construction inherently carrying a presentative force. It may express that SP/W was told about Kemal’s arrival, it may provide information as to what people may infer or have inferred (due to some circumstantial evidence), or it may even convey a mirative meaning by which SP/W is noting some unexpected evidence occurring in front of his/her eyes. DeLancey (1997: 40) emphasizes that “the [...] paradoxical range of use of the Turkish form [...] is [...] a pattern motivated by cross-linguistically relevant considerations.” According to Slobin and Aksu, all the usages of *-miş* have a “common core of psychological distancing from the event” (1982: 196). Lazard (1999: 95) also notes a distance established by the SP/W from his/her own speech: “They are expressing them mediately, [...] placing themselves, so to speak, at a distance from what they are saying.”

What clearly emerges from the descriptions above is a speech act type where SP/W merely “presents” some evidence for the benefit of AD/R, without an overt epistemic involvement in his/her own statement. As a result, SP/W’s utterance is accordingly open to further evaluations on his/her behalf (viz., evaluational distancing), as s/he could then – and just then – comment on the evidence s/he has just provided.

5.2 Evaluations versus concessives

We are now to briefly consider a potential counterexample to the distinction between presentative and evaluational force. Let us start from the usage from Section 4.3 of *may* and *must* provided by Cornillie (2009: 50):

- (25) There is a wounded dog lying on the other side of the street. It **must** be in pain.

As statistically demonstrated previously, *must* does not allow an evaluational distancing on behalf of SP/W:

- (25) *a. There is a wounded dog lying on the other side of the street. It **must** be in pain, ***but I don’t think so.**

However, with the employment of the weak-epistemic *may*, a subsequent evaluational distancing is open to two different readings:

- (26) *a. There is a wounded dog lying on the other side of the street. It **may** be in pain, ***but I don't think so**.
- b. There is a wounded dog lying on the other side of the street. It may be in pain, **but I don't think so**.

In which respect does (26a) differ from the stressed version of *may* in (26b)? (26a) is an evaluational speech act: SP/W makes a subjective – or takes part in an intersubjective – evaluation about some state of affairs. As a result of this, if s/he negates *p*, s/he will then logically contradict him/herself. In this sense, *may* is a marker of epistemic modality as much as *must* would be in the same context.

Quite differently, the stressed version of *may* in (26b) functions as the protasis of a concessive construction: *although p, on the contrary q*. In this case, *may* represents a semantic evolution from root-possibility and epistemicity to concessivity, as suggested in Bybee et al. (1994). Squartini (2012) observes that the protasis of a concessive construction provides some evidence/knowledge for the benefit of AD/R, which SP/W may then comment in the apodosis. Based on the present model, the protasis of a concessive is then inherently presentative, while the apodosis is likely to be – though not necessarily – evaluational:

I am providing this piece of acquired knowledge, but I am subsequently expressing a contrastive evaluation/information.

As first argued in Sweetser (1990: 69–73), once modal constructions are used as concessive markers, they are “conversationally reinterpreted” as speech-act modals, thus losing their original root and epistemic meanings. This point is further supported by the claimed “polyphonic” dimension of concessivity, which “more directly impinges on evidentiality rather than epistemicity” (Kronning 2003; Squartini 2012).

In Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (2000: 382), interactional concessivity is said to involve a dyadic structure in which participant B, acknowledging a statement made by participant A, “reports” it. In this sense, with the concessive use of *may* in (26b), SP/W does not make an evaluation, but rather intersubjectively “presents” what (some) other(s) have inferred or *may be* expected to infer from some external evidence. As a result, the presentative status of *p* in (26b) will then allow a subsequent evaluational distancing (*but I don't think so*).

Concerning this point, it needs to be stressed that *may* and similar markers of epistemic possibility (e. g., *could*, *might*) are compatible with this highly intersubjectified concessive employment (see Traugott and Dasher 2002: 115; Narrog 2010: 31 and Narrog 2012: 36) where – I add – a semasiological shift occurs from the encoding of an original evaluational force to a newly reanalyzed presentative one.

The process of intersubjectification of *may* is one important indicator of the diachronic continuum from epistemic modality to evidentiality (e. g., Nuyts 2012), or, in other words, from constructions of evaluation to constructions of presentation. This is precisely the reason why an operational model to disambiguate the illocutionary force conveyed through a modal construction at a certain stage of semantic change is needed.

5.3 Presentative versus assertive force: Toward a taxonomy of constatives

The last point to be made is that the notion of presentative force is “at issue” even in constructions encoding visual evidence. In fact, in such cases, SP/W is not making an evaluation about the truthfulness of *p*, but rather merely presenting some sensory evidence for the benefit of AD/R. In other words, when we report about what we saw, it is not really at issue what we think about it, but rather the sensorial reliability of the piece of information we are providing.

To give an example, Korean firsthand evidentials are usually intended to express some sort of psychological distance, elsewhere defined also in terms of weakened reliability, lack of responsibility, or severance of consciousness (e. g., Im 1982; Kim 1981; Shin 1980). Chung (2010) notes that they encode “presentative speech acts” rather than “assertive” ones (see Faller 2002). In the former case, SP/W merely presents or introduces a piece of information without a personal commitment to the truth of his/her own evaluation; in the latter case, the information is supported by SP/W’s personal commitment to the factuality of *p*. Consider the pair of examples below (Chung 2010: 933):

- (27) a. *mary-ka phyenci-lul ssu-te-la.*
 Mary-NOM letter-ACC write-S.PAST-PRST
 “I saw Mary was writing a/the letter.”
- b. *mary-ka phyenci-lul ssu-ko iss-ess-ta.*
 Mary-NOM letter-ACC write-CONJ be-PRF-DEC
 “Mary was writing a/the letter.”

Although in the literature direct evidentials are traditionally equated with factuality (see Willett 1988), Chung describes (27a) as a form of presentative statement, whereby SP/W is neither making an evaluation nor assertively expressing a factual proposition. Rather, s/he merely communicates what s/he saw with his/her own eyes. Simply put, SP/W here serves as a channel through which the proposition is obtained and delivered to the hearer: *from what I saw*, *p*. Conversely, in (27b) SP/W makes an assertion – which pragmatically always

carries assertive force ($AsF(p)$) – as s/he states a factual proposition without problematizing p in terms of some source of information (what evidentials do) or the evaluation of the state of affairs (this is the case of epistemic modals).

Crucially, illocutionary speech acts are ascriptive to a specific action as they satisfy “a commitment as having resulted from the performance” (Croddy 2002: 1116). This brings us to the conclusive claim of this study, as we are finally able to propose an onomasiological taxonomy of constative speech acts, based on two forms of pragmatic ascription:

- a. SP/W’s ascription to his/her own evaluation.
- b. SP/W’s ascription to the factuality of his/her statement.

(a) has to do with the SP/W being more or less committed to his/her own reasoning process, that is, the creative production of a judgment about some state of affairs. On the other hand, (b) regards SP/W’s ascription to the state of affairs of a situation independently from what his/her evaluation may be. The two in fact do not need to coincide, in the sense that SP/W may communicate his/her own evaluation without being certain that what s/he thinks is an undeniable fact. On the other hand, in the second case s/he may posit a statement as a mere fact, without the need to problematize the state of affairs of p .

While the former may be tested through the evaluational distancing from p (*but I don’t think so*), in the second case, SP/W may or may not establish a factual distancing from p (*but I am not sure*). As the former – we have seen – constitutes a powerful criterion to distinguish prototypical evidential strategies (corresponding to presentative speech acts) from epistemic modal ones (as evaluational speech acts), the latter comes into play when the assertive force of a statement needs to be operationally distinguished from evidential or epistemic modal constructions:

Assertive force $AsF(p)$

- (28) *It’s raining,*
- a. **but I think it’s not.*
 - b. **but I am not sure.*
- (Q_ (41a): 0/40; (41b): 0/40)

Evaluational force $EvF(p)$

- (29) *I think (that) it’s raining,*
- a. **but I think it’s not.*
 - b. *but I am not sure.*
- (Q_ (42a): 0/40; (42b): 40/40)

Presentative force PrF(p)

- (30) *Apparently, it's raining,*
 a. *but I think it's not.*
 b. *but I am not sure.*
 (Q_ (43a): 34/40; (43b): 37/40)

As can be seen from (28) above, the assertive force of an utterance is aimed at positing a proposition as a fact, thus neither an evaluational nor a factual distancing is possible ((28a) and (28b)) (see Martin and White 2005: 98–99 on the monoglossic status of assertions). On the other hand, an evaluation is ascriptive to the reasoning process behind the utterance, and is then not compatible with a subsequent evaluational distancing (29a). Finally, as given in (30), a presentative is uttered with the aim of providing a piece of markedly acquired knowledge. As a result, neither the factuality nor the reasoning process beyond p are pragmatically at issue¹⁶ and are thus potentially defeasible by SP/W ((30a) and (30b)). The same clearly applies to direct evidence, as the illocutionary force would still be of a presentative type: *I saw it was raining, but I am not sure/ but I think it was just an illusion.*

6 Conclusions

This study shed new light on the relationship between the three domains of evidentiality, factuality, and epistemic modality. In particular, it reversed the general procedure of analysis by focusing on the illocutionary force that is pragmatically conveyed when a proposition is modally marked. What emerged from this approach is that constative speech acts may alternatively carry an evaluational, a presentative, or an assertive force. With the operational testing supported by corpus-based evidence proposed throughout this paper, it is now possible to disentangle the pragmatic structure of a modally marked statement and draw some empirical conclusions about the illocutionary force behind a modal construction or a pragmatic strategy.

Finally, it cannot be denied that multimodal marking, the overt positing of some preparatory conditions, background knowledge, and also the particular

¹⁶ This is not to say that a presentative construction cannot presuppose factuality (i. e. *it has been found that p*), but simply that the optimal relevance of a presentative act is not to “state what is true” nor to “make an evaluation” but rather to provide a piece of acquired knowledge: *it has been found that p, however I think -p.*

intonation of an utterance may all affect the illocutionary force of a constative. Similarly, it cannot be denied that the perlocutionary effects of a constative cannot always be generalized or unequivocally predicted, as, for instance, SP/W may make use of a presentative speech act with the “secret” intention of persuading AD/R that p is true. That being said, while these are fundamental topics awaiting for further experimental research, the present account crucially provides a new empirical methodology for the disambiguation of the modal marking of constative speech acts at a prototypical level of analysis.

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Bionote

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