

PERSONAL AND FACTUAL SEMANTICS ACROSS LANGUAGES

Full presentation
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Abstract

There is a category of evidential, variously called personal-factual (Loughnane forthcoming), participatory-factual (Loughnane 2007, Rule 1997, San Roque and Loughnane forthcoming) and performative (Oswalt 1986), that indicates that “the speaker knows of what he speaks because he is performing the action himself or has just performed it” (Oswalt 1986: 34). An example from Kashaya is given below.

(1) *mi'-li* *ʔa* *me-ʔe-l* *p^hakúm-mela*
 there-VISIBLE I your-father-O kill-PERFORMATIVE
 ‘Right there I killed your father.’ (Oswalt 1986: 35)

Such evidentials have been shown to be present in the verbal inflection of the Pomoan languages Kashaya (Oswalt 1986) and Central Pomo (Mithun 1999) and the Trans New Guinea languages Oksapmin (Loughnane 2007, forthcoming), Fasu (Loeweke and May 1980, San Roque and Loughnane forthcoming) and Foe (Rule 1997).

Such evidential terms do not, however, figure in typological work on evidentiality, such as Aikhenvald (2004) and Willett (1988). Rather, visual or direct evidence is seen as the strongest form of evidence available to speakers of a given language, as per the evidential hierarchy for that language.

In this presentation I argue that personal-factual semantics are, in fact, present in evidential terms, such as ‘visual’ and ‘direct’, as described for a number of languages from around the world. It is this combination with other evidential semantics that has contributed to personal-factual semantics “flying under the radar”.

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