Evidential shell nouns in English and Spanish financial texts

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Résumé

Despite the abundant literature on evidentiality available nowadays, work on evidential nouns is still scarce. This article sets forth an analysis of the expression of evidentiality by shell nouns in English and Spanish financial texts. We take as point of departure a broad approach to evidentiality which includes all the expressions that indicate the kind, source and/or evaluation of the evidence for or against the truth of a proposition. The nouns analyzed belong to Schmid's (2000) category of 'evidential shell nouns', which occur in 'the evidential frame', a construction consisting of an observed fact (the Sign), a mental state (the Belief), and a relation between them (the observation of the Sign triggers the Belief); the Sign and the Belief have the status of propositions. Examples of evidential shell nouns are *evidence, indication, proof, sign* and their Spanish equivalents *evidencia, indicio/indicación, prueba* and *signo/señal*, among many others. The choice of financial texts was motivated by the importance that shell nouns have in this register, in which facts are often presented as evidence for drawing conclusions or making predictions about financial matters. The corpus analyzed consist of 80 written texts, 40 from specialized journals and 40 from non-specialized quality journals, totalling about 50,000 words. The texts have been selected according to the following criteria: financial and macroeconomic issues as topics, mainly informative purpose, and publication between 2013 and 2015. The analysis of the shell evidential nouns will show that their (non-)evidential status is context-dependent: they are non-evidential when the Belief is non-existent, and in some cases when they occur in generic statements or lie inside the scope of an irrealis context. Finally, a number of different constructions with these nouns will be studied in terms of the relative prominence of the main discourse functions of shell nouns (encapsulating, labelling and signalling).

Mots-Clés: Key words: evidentiality, evidential nouns, shell nouns, financial texts, discourse functions

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