
Embedding evidence: on two types of evidentials

Jennifer Tan*¹ and Johannes Mursell*²

¹Spanish National Research Council (ILLA-CSIC) – ILLA-CSIC Calle Albasanz, 26-28 Madrid 28037, Spain

²Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main – Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 1 60323 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Abstract

Crosslinguistically, evidentials differ along certain parameters (Schenner, 2008), among them embeddability. Focussing on two particles, German *wohl* and Tagalog *yata*, and following Rooryck (2001)'s conception of evidentiality, we argue that both particles should be considered evidentials. This is based on the observation that they indicate both source and reliability of information, since adding them to a sentence expresses that the speaker has some piece of evidence to believe the propositional content of the utterance but is uncertain about it. However, while both contribute a similar meaning to their host utterance, their distribution in embedded clauses sets them apart.

Contrasts in embedding have led to a treatment of evidentials as either illocutionary modifiers (Faller, 2002) or epistemic modals (Izvorski, 1997; Matthewson *et al.*, 2007). In this talk, we show that *wohl* can only be embedded in a subset of the contexts in which embedding *yata* is possible. This behaviour is expected since *wohl*, as discourse particle or illocutionary modifier, depends on the presence of illocutionary force, entering a syntactic agreement relation with it (Coniglio and Zegrean, 2012), while *yata*, being an epistemic modal, does not. Thus, we predict that *wohl* is found in those embedded clauses that have independently been argued to contain illocutionary force (Haegeman, 2006) while the distribution of *yata* is less restricted.

Our analysis has two important consequences. First, despite similar meaning contributions, we provide support for the idea that evidential markers need a non-uniform treatment as either illocutionary modifiers or epistemic modals, considering *wohl* and *yata*'s embeddability. Second, we show that, following Faller (2014), constraints on embeddability are a valid diagnostic to distinguish these types, as the speech act operator type of evidentials are dependent on illocutionary force and are thus much more restricted in their distribution in embedded clauses than the less limited epistemic modals.

Keywords: evidentials, illocutionary modifier, epistemic modal, particles, *wohl*, *yata*

*Speaker