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Abstract:

Existing accounts of evidentials (grammatical morphemes indicating the type of evidence the speaker has for making a statement) have so far primarily studied their contribution to the audience's comprehension of the speaker's meaning. However, Wilson (2011) argues that evidentials perform primarily an epistemic vigilance function by displaying to the audience that the communicator is competent in distinguishing her information sources. This helps to portray the communicator as trustworthy, and also enables the audience to evaluate the evidential status of the content of the communicated message. In this paper I want to argue that Wilson's perspective on evidentials allows for a stronger explanation of the use of evidentials as genre indicators than is possible in purely comprehension-based accounts. That evidentials can be used in ways other than indicating information source, e.g. as indicators of genre, is widely reported. The data is summarised by Aikhenvald (2004) who shows that very often, reported evidentials may be used by convention in traditional narratives. While other conventional associations between genres and evidentials may exist, the association between reported evidentials and traditional narratives is by far the most common one. This strongly suggests that there must be something in the nature of the reported evidential and the traditional narrative genres that makes this conventional association particularly viable. Following Unger (2012), I argue that true reported evidentials (as opposed to general meta-representative use markers and other information source indicators) raise the activation status of a whole array

of cognitive mechanisms that specialise in checking the communicated content for evidential support and coherence with existing beliefs. Moreover, I argue that traditional narratives are relevant in virtue of communicating cultural values or norms and arguing for their validity based on exemplification. This means that processing traditional narratives strongly engages the argumentation module, and reported evidentials raise the activation status of the argumentation module as a whole. This accounts for the widespread convention to use reported evidentials as genre indicators in traditional narratives. I also briefly review the implications of this account for conventional associations involving other evidentials and genres.

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CHAPTER X

EVIDENTIALS, GENRE AND EPISTEMIC VIGILANCE

CHRISTOPH UNGER

1 Introduction[1]

Evidentials are grammaticalised morphemes that indicate to the audience the type of evidence the speaker has for making a statement. Following a recent impetus in typological studies (summarised and evaluated in Aikhenvald 2004), there has been an increased effort in theoretical semantic and pragmatic treatments of these markers. The focus has been on descriptions in formal or cognitive terms of the systematic contribution that evidentials make to the audience's representation of the speaker's meaning. However, evidentials are remarkably often used in ways that at first sight differ from their supposed semantic import. Aikhenvald (2004) points in particular to the use of evidentials as genre indicators, as well as unexpected uses of evidentials for changing perspectives, foregrounding or backgrounding information and climax indication. A full pragmatic account of the use of evidentials will have to explain how these pragmatic exploitations of evidentials come about.

In this paper I will focus on the use of evidentials as genre indicators. I will argue that Unger's (2006) relevance-theoretic account of the role of genre in discourse comprehension can provide the basis for a plausible account of their main uses. However, a stronger explanation is available by considering not only the effects of evidentials and genre on comprehension, but also their function to exploit dedicated cognitive mechanisms that enable audiences to guard against

misinformation and communicators to persuade vigilant audiences. This provides evidence both for Wilson's (2011) claim that evidentials have primarily an argumentative function and Unger's (2010) proposal that some genres may be better understood as being conditioned by the demands of cognitive mechanisms for argumentation rather than by those dedicated to comprehension alone.

2   Evidentials as genre indicators

Aikhenvald (2004) surveys extensive cross-linguistic evidence that evidentials are often used as indicators—or in her words,"tokens"—of genre in the sense that the choice of evidentials in some instances is best predicted by assuming a conventional association between evidential choice and genre, and not by recourse to the main semantic function of source indication. For example, languages distinguishing three evidential categories (sensory, inferential and reported) have a strong tendency to use the reported evidential in traditional stories by convention. This can reveal itself in different ways: sometimes, the reported evidential in traditional stories is used in a highly repetitive, even redundant way. This is the case for example in Kham and Wanka Quechua.[2]

In other languages, the opposite is the case: the reported evidential is used much more rarely in traditional stories once the genre is established, so that it is often missing where one would expect it given its core semantics. An example of a language implementing this strategy is Wintu.

Although there is a strong tendency to associate traditional narratives (folk stories) with reported evidentials, there is variation as to which genre is associated with which specific genre in a language. For example, Tariana is a language with a highly elaborate system of evidentials. In this language, folk tales and animal stories are conventionally associated with the remote past reported evidential, whereas history stories based on recoverable evidence are associated with the assumed evidential, personal experience narratives with the remote past visual evidential and stories of unseen experiences such as stories of spirit encounters or dreams are indicated by the non-visual evidential.

However, the use of the reported evidential in narratives is not universal. There

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2   Languages referred to in this paper and their classification are the following: Cree, Montagnais, Naskapi (Algonquian), Estonian (Balto-Finnic, Finno-Ugric), Kham (Tibeto-Burman, Sino-Tibetan), Nganasan (Samoyedic, Uralic), Sissala (Gur, Niger-Congo), Tsez (Northeast Caucasian), Warlpiri (Australian), Wintu (Penution, California Penutian, Wintuan), Wanka Quechua (Quechua).

is no such conventional relation in Nganasan, Warlpiri and Cree. Moreover, there are non-typical associations between genre and evidentials. For example, in Tsez, traditional narratives are indicated by the firsthand evidential.

Summarizing this evidence we can observe that there is an overwhelming tendency in languages with grammaticalised evidentiality to associate reported evidentials with telling traditional stories. When this happens, the use of evidentials as genre indicators overrides their semantic contribution proper. But there are cross-linguistic differences in the mapping between narrative sub-genres and evidential categories.

The question that arises from these observations is not merely why evidentials can be used as conventional indicators for some genre or other, apart from their core semantics. Rather, there is a more specific question that needs to be addressed: Why is there such a strong tendency to associate traditional narratives (as opposed to other genres) with reported evidentials (as opposed to other evidentials)? This is the central question that I will address in this paper. My answer will revolve around the idea that there is something in the nature of reported evidentials—but not in the nature of other evidentials—and in the nature of traditional stories—but not in the nature of other genres—that naturally invites the use of reported evidentials in the telling of traditional stories. In order to develop this idea I will first look in section (3) at the semantics of evidentials in general, and in particular at the semantics of reported evidentials. I will argue that some—but not all—reported evidentials are closely linked to cognitive mechanisms dedicated to argumentation and epistemic vigilance. In section (4) I will discuss some observations on the pragmatics of traditional (folk) stories. My argument will be that processing traditional narratives (folk stories) for relevance requires a strong contribution from cognitive argumentation mechanisms. In section (5), I will draw on these insights into the semantics of reported evidentials and the pragmatics of traditional stories (folk stories) and argue that those types of reported evidentials that are closely linked to cognitive argumentation mechanisms are ideally suited to stimulate argumentation procedures for the interpretation of traditional narratives, whereas those types of reported evidentials that are not linked to cognitive argumentation mechanisms in this way naturally do not have this effect and are generally not used as genre indicators. I will discuss preliminary cross-linguistic evidence in support of this claim. In section (6) I will conclude by pointing out some consequences of this analysis for the study of evidentials in general.

3 The semantics of evidentials

3.1 Evidentials and comprehension

Evidentials have been studied in anthropological linguistics since Boas (1911) and received much attention in typological linguistics at least since the seminal publications of Willett (1988) and Chafe and Nichols (1986). However, theoretical accounts of the semantics and pragmatics of evidentials are still fairly recent developments.

Within relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1995; Wilson and Sperber 2004), Blass (1989, 1990) argues that evidentials are procedural indicators of *interpretive* or *metarepresentational* use. This means that they semantically encode a constraint on the inferential pragmatic interpretation of the utterance containing the evidential: it is to be treated as being relevant not in terms of a description of states of affairs in the world, but in virtue of *interpretively resembling* (i.e., sharing logical properties with) other representations, such as thoughts or utterances of other individuals.[3] Blass found that the hearsay particle *ré* in Sissala occurs in all varieties of interpretive use. Itani (1998) describes a Japanese particle indicating a more restricted sub-type of interpretive use. The relevance-theoretic account of evidentials as metarepresentation indicators has been applied to a variety of cases (Papafragou 2000; Papafragou et al. 2007; Noh 2000).

Formal semantic and pragmatic accounts include Faller (2002) and Davis et al. (2007). Faller (2002) analyses evidentials as illocutionary operators that modify the sincerity conditions of speech acts. For example, the reported evidential modifies the sincerity conditions of the speech act made so that the speaker does not have to believe the proposition expressed so long as there is some other speaker who has said something with the same propositional content. In effect, the reported evidential creates a new speech act, a *presentation* speech act. Davis et al. (2007) argue that direct or sensory evidentials raise, whereas indirect or reported evidentials lower the probability threshold above which assertions are treated as true. In this way, the Quality maxim—i.e., the maxim of truthfulness (Grice 1989) —can be satisfied even if the speaker may not have good enough evidence to vouch for the veracity of the statement.

Different though these approaches may be, they have in common their focus on

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3   A third type of metarepresentational use, which does not concern the topic of this paper, involves metarepresenting abstract representations such as logical properties, syntactic representations or utterance types (Wilson 2000).

the contribution that evidentials make to the audience's comprehension of the speaker's meaning. However, Wilson (2011) argues that this perspective on the contribution of evidentials to meaning and comprehension misses understanding their main function in communication. According to Wilson (2011), the main function of evidentials is to provide clues to the audience for assessing whether to believe the communicated message on the basis of the alleged evidence for it. In other words, evidentials are tools for affecting the audience's decision to believe the communicated content rather than tools merely for making oneself understood.

In this paper I argue that Wilson's perspective provides a deeper explanation of the use of evidentials as genre indicators. To see what this claim involves I will first discuss recent research that provides some new insights into the relation between understanding and believing in verbal communication.

3.2   Comprehension, persuasion and epistemic vigilance

Sperber et al. (2010) point out that communicators typically have two aims: to be understood by their audience, and to get the audience believe them. Audiences, on the other hand, have several related aims: to understand the communicator, to gain relevant and true knowledge, and to guard against misinformation. In order to make optimal use of ostensive communication, audiences need to evaluate the trustworthiness of communicated information. Therefore communicators need to speak in a way that passes the audience's evaluation of their trustworthiness. Since these needs are basic for ostensive communication to be beneficial, it can be expected that there are cognitive mechanisms in the mind that are dedicated to exercise the tasks that underlie the audience's *epistemic vigilance* towards misinformation and the communicators' efforts to *persuade* vigilant audiences.

Mascaro and Sperber (2009) found experimental evidence that there are three competencies crucial for exercising epistemic vigilance, which develop in humans along characteristic paths. First, there is a competence for recognising benevolence or malevolence in communicators, which develops in early infancy and is fully developed by the age of three years. This *moral competence* is not only useful in adjusting one's trust in communicators, but more generally for selecting co-operation partners. Second, there is a capacity of *naïve epistemology*, which develops over the period starting at the age of six months to a year and matures before the age of four years. This capacity allows audiences to evaluate the truth or

falsity of communicated messages in the light of evidence about the communicator's competence. Lastly, there is a *mindreading* competence dedicated to recognise deceptive intentions of communicators, which develops between the age of four to six years.

These competencies help audiences evaluate the communicator's benevolence, competence and honesty, and to adjust their level of trust in the communicated content accordingly. In other words, they enable audiences to exercise epistemic vigilance directed at the source of communication. However, there is another way by which audiences can exercise epistemic vigilance: by evaluating the believability or trustworthiness of the content of communication. This may be done by checking how well the communicated content is coherent with other beliefs held by the audience and assessing how consistent it would be to accept the communicated message as well as such background beliefs at the same time. Another factor is to consider the evidential status of the communicated information in terms of the reliability of its source. Notice that this involves checking the source of information, not the source of communication, as discussed above. Checking the coherence and evidential status of communicated messages amounts to what Sperber et al. (2010) call epistemic vigilance directed at the content of communication.

While some coherence checking and evidential assessment is carried out automatically by the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic (Sperber et. al. 2010:374-376), there are cases where these processes do not suffice and the audience is not prepared to accept the communicated ideas on trust. In a series of papers, Dan Sperber and his associates have argued that these cases are evaluated in a mental module dedicated to evaluating arguments (Sperber 2000, 2001; Mercier and Sperber 2009; Sperber et al. 2010). This module takes claims as inputs and delivers representations of arguments for accepting these claims as output. Its function is to enable audiences to reason about the acceptability of communicated ideas and to help communicators persuade vigilant audiences.

How can communicators persuade audiences equipped with such an argumentation module for epistemic vigilance? One strategy is to display the logical consistency that the audience is checking for by using logical and inferential vocabulary: *if...then, since, also, but* etc. Another one is to provide clues to the audience about the evidential status of the information conveyed. This might be done by using evidential adverbials such as *evidently, apparently* or by using grammatical evidentials. Since these types of expressions—logical and inferential indicators, and evidential expressions—are so closely linked to the argumentation

module's contribution to epistemic vigilance, Sperber (2001) and Wilson (2011) argue that the main function of these expressions consists in aiding the epistemic assessment of communication rather than in guiding comprehension.

Wilson (2011) points out that the use of grammaticalised evidentials has another effect besides helping audiences gauge the evidential status of the communicated content: the skilful use of these clues can also raise the status of the communicator as one who is reliable because she carefully distinguishes her source of information. In other words, competent and diligent indication of information source is beneficial for passing the audience's epistemic vigilance directed at the source of communication as well.

3.3   Evidentials, epistemic vigilance and reported evidentials

As mentioned above, the earlier relevance theoretic account of evidentials analyses them as procedural indicators of metarepresentational use. According to Wilson (2011), procedural indicators have the effect of raising the activation level of certain heuristic inference procedures that the comprehension procedure has access to. For example, the procedural indicator *after all* raises the activation of a heuristic process that treats the information conveyed by the utterance as strengthening some already held assumption. As a result, the comprehension procedure will first consider interpretive hypotheses that contain outputs of that heuristic sub-procedure and check them for relevance, thus saving the audience processing effort.

In the massively modular cognitive architecture underlying this theoretical perspective on procedural indicators, the question arises whether the procedures that indicators may trigger do all have to be linked to the comprehension module. Wilson (2011) points out that procedural indicators cluster around certain domains for which dedicated cognitive mechanisms (or modules) plausibly exist. For example, interjections appear to trigger procedures of emotion reading, grammaticalised honorifics in languages like Korean may be related to social cognition, and pronouns are linked to comprehension. In the same way, one can argue that inferential connectives and evidentials are linked to the argumentation module. On this analysis, evidentials have primarily an *argumentation function*.

Unger (2012) investigates what light Wilson's (2011) claim about the cognitive function of evidentials may shed on some differences of usage between reported

evidentials in Sissala and Estonian. Blass (1989, 1990) argues that the Sissala particle *ré* is used in all kinds of metarepresentational use. The particle can not only be used in reports of other individual's words, but also in reports of other individual's thoughts, in irony, in questions and answers, for introducing direct and indirect speech, following speech act verbs and verbs of propositional attitude (e.g. *think, believe, know, want*), in echoic utterances, in proverbs and sayings and in utterances echoing implicatures. All these usages involve the metarepresentational use of utterances.

There is evidence that the Estonian quotative is also used for other types of metarepresentational use as well. For example, this form can be used to indicate information that the speaker has inferred from observable evidence (inferential evidentiality). In the following example from an autobiography, the author writes about his interrogation by secret service officers. At one point, the interrogators do not know any more what to do or say to him, and the author comments on this as in (1):

(1) Minu   asi paistis   olevat   segane
    My.GEN case appeared be.QUOT unclear
    'My case appeared to be an unclear one.'
    (Harri Haamer 1993/2001: Meie elu on taevas. Siberi mälestused. [Our life is
    in heaven. Remembrances from Siberia.] Tallinn: Logos. P. 23) (Unger 2003)

In this utterance, the author attributes a thought like HARRI HAAMER'S CASE IS UNCLEAR to the interrogators, based upon what he can infer from their behaviour.

The quotative can also be used in indirect quotations as an alternative to the indicative. Erelt, et al. (1993, 295, §716) give the following example:

(2)   (a) Jüri ütles, et   Sirje sõidab   maale.
           Jüri said,   that Sirje travels to.countryside.
           'Jüri said that Sirje is travelling to the countryside.'

     (b) Jüri ütles, et   Sirje sõitvat   maale.
           Jüri said   that Sirje travel-QUOT to.countryside.

'Jüri said that Sirje is travelling to the countryside'

Moreover, the quotative can also be used following verbs of propositional attitude such as *teadma* 'know', *uskuma* 'believe', *väitma* 'claim', *kartma* 'be afraid'.[4] This use closely parallels the use of the Sissala particle *ré,* which can also occur in (direct and) indirect questions as well as hearsay. According to Sperber and Wilson (1988; 1995) and Wilson (2000), the semantics of interrogatives crucially involves the notion of metarepresentational use: interrogatives metarepresent relevant answers. However, the metarepresented answers are not necessarily attributed to someone, they are instances of *non-attributive* metarepresentational use. In contrast, utterances conveying information from hearsay are attributed to a source, they are instances of *attributive* metarepresentational use. Since the Estonian quotative can occur in two different sub-types of metarepresentational use, it must be concluded that this verb form indicates the more general category of metarepresentational use.

But although the Estonian quotative can be shown to have a more general metarepresentational use indicating function, there is a widespread intuition that the use of this form typically conveys the idea that the speaker distances herself from the truth of the information relayed. Thus, Erelt et al. (1995, §63) describe the use of the quotative as follows:

> The circumstance that the information is being mediated gives the quotative the connotation that the speaker is invariably unsure of what he conveys, wherefore it is used primarily to convey that the speaker is unsure of the truthfulness of the state of affairs conveyed and does not want to commit himself to the truth of the information

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4   According to Erelt et al. (1993), the verb form used in this construction is in fact the -*vat* Infinitive and not the quotative. This -*vat* infinitive is morphologically indistinguishable from the quotative. There is a syntactic difference in that the use of the -*vat* form in indirect questions occurs in subordinate sentences. However, it is far from clear whether this syntactic difference implies a semantic one as well, and given the fact that hearsay evidentiality and indirect questions are both instances of the metarepresentational use of utterances and therefore fall into one natural category, I conclude that a better analysis results from assuming that the quotative and the -*vat* Infinitive are really the same form. Notice also the cross-linguistic evidence from Sissala, where the so-called hearsay indicator ré is also used in (direct and) indirect questions as well as hearsay.

conveyed.[5]

The picture that emerges is that the Estonian quotative semantically indicates a more general variety of metarepresentational use, but pragmatically there is a strong preference to use the quotative primarily in ways that are more typical of the hearsay modality in the sense of Palmer (1986). In these uses, the information source indication function is accompanied by epistemic overtones indicating a diminished speaker's commitment to the truth of the information conveyed. Unger (2012) argues that this can be accounted for by assuming that the Estonian quotative is inherently linked not only to comprehension, where it triggers a general metarepresentational use procedure just like Sissala *ré*, but also to the argumentation module: it raises the activation level of the argumentation module as a whole, including all sub-procedures linked to this mechanism. This facilitates not only the hearer's comprehension of the metarepresentational nature of the utterance, but also encourages the hearer to assess the argumentational status of the utterance, and in particular what the speaker's attribution of the information to a different source contributes to the question whether the hearer should accept the information conveyed as true. The latter aspect is facilitated in the sense that by raising the activation level of the argumentation module, the processing effort involved in engaging in argumentative evaluation is reduced. This predicts, as a result, the usage of the quotative is strongly preferred in situations where not only the attribution of information to some source, but also the audience's own assessment of the information's reliability is called for. Unger (2012) notes that Alas and Treikelder's (2010) observation that the Estonian quotative is rarely used in journalistic writing supports this prediction. The scarcity of the quotative in journalistic writings is somewhat unexpected as competent journalistic reports should distinguish between reported facts and the journalist's interpretation, and the use of a reported evidential seems like a good way to do this clearly and unobtrusively. But if Unger's (2012) analysis is right, the Estonian quotative does not merely indicate information source but also encourages the audience to draw conclusions for epistemic assessment. These side-effects are not normally desired in journalistic reports.

At this point the question arises as to what purpose such a general trigger for

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5   "Teate vahendatusest tingituna annab kvotatiiv kõneleja enda suhtumisele paratamatult ebakindluse varjundi, mistõttu teda kasutatakse rõhutamaks, et kõneleja ise kahtleb tegevussituatsiooni reaalsuses ega taha vastutust teate õigsuse eest enda peale võtta". Translation my own.

raising the activation level of the argumentation module should serve. After all, comprehension and epistemic vigilance mechanisms work largely in parallel: assessing the relevance of an utterance involves extending tentative trust in the speaker, but the assessment of cognitive effects may turn up inconsistencies that a typical conscious process of argumentation needs to resolve (Sperber et al. 2010:376 and 367). Both types of processes are closely linked aspects of a general process of utterance interpretation, triggered by ostensive stimuli. Therefore one should expect that the argumentation module as well as the comprehension module are getting activated by the detection of ostensive stimuli, or in other words, by the mere presence of stimuli in their input domain. But although the argumentation module evaluates the content of communicated information largely in parallel to the comprehension module, it is somewhat special in several ways: First, the argumentation module is a metarepresentational module taking claims as input and delivering representations of reasons for accepting these claims as output. This involves fairly sophisticated metarepresentational inferences that are presumably relatively costly to perform. Moreover, it presupposes that the claims have been comprehended before they can be assessed for their logical coherence. Finally, Mercier and Sperber (2009) argue that the activation of many cognitive modules does not merely depend on the presence of stimuli in their input domain. They point to the example of the face recognition: although a friend's face is very familiar to you, you may not recognise him when you meet him in an unexpected location at an unexpected time. Mercier and Sperber argue that this is because the face recognition module is not only triggered by the presence of a stimulus in its input domain, but also on attention factors, conditioned by the level of expected relevance of the output of the module. They argue that all cognitive modules are situated on a cline, where modules that do hardly depend on attention factors for their activation would be situated on one end[6] and modules that depend a lot on such top-down factors for activation would be situated on the other. The argumentation module, they argue, depends to a greater extent on attention factors than most other modules. If this is the case, then linguistic indicators raising the activation level of the argumentation module as a whole could be valuable for making sure that the argumentative evaluation of utterances will not be cut short. Moreover, procedural triggers for the argumentation module in general are particularly desirable for communicators to ensure that their audience invests the right kind of processing effort by dedicating resources for the evaluation of

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6   Prime examples would be reflexes for danger detection.

arguments.

To summarize this discussion, my claim is that the Estonian quotative and the Sissala hearsay particle ré both trigger a procedure that looks for metarepresentational interpretations of the utterance. This procedure is linked to the comprehension module. The Estonian quotative, but not the Sissala particle *ré*, additionally triggers a procedure that consists in raising the activation level of the argumentation module as a whole, with all the sub-procedures linked to it. So while these respective hearsay indicators share a comprehension function, only the Estonian quotative has an argumentation function in addition.

This analysis claims that individual evidentials may have argumentation or comprehension functions. It is an empirical matter which evidential of which language is linked to the comprehension or the argumentation module, and in which way. In fact, evidentials in two languages that are considered to fall in one and the same category may turn out to link to these cognitive modules in different ways. For example, the hearsay particle *ré* in Sissala differs in cognitive function from the reported evidential in Estonian (the quotative verb form). This difference will turn out to provide important evidence for the account of evidentials as genre indicators that I will develop in the next section.

4   The pragmatics of traditional stories

Having reviewed semantic aspects of hearsay evidentials, we need to turn to the discussion of the pragmatics of traditional stories in order to understand how evidentials may contribute to the interpretation of such stories. In a first step, I will apply the relevance-theoretic account of genre in Unger (2006) to the pragmatics of traditional narratives (folk stories) (section 4.1). This account focusses on the comprehension function of the traditional narrative genre. While this account can shed some light on the question about why reported evidentials may be suitable as genre indicators of traditional narratives, it leaves several questions unanswered. In order to address these, I will turn in section (4.2) to a discussion of the role of argumentation in the processing of traditional narratives.

4.1   Fine-tuning relevance expectations with genre

Within relevance theory, Unger (2006) develops an explicit account of the role

of genre in verbal communication that is firmly integrated in the heuristic comprehension procedure that—according to Sperber and Wilson (1995) and Wilson and Sperber (2004)—constrain all aspects of the inferential phase of utterance or text comprehension. The essence of this account of the pragmatics of genre is that genre information is easily accessible for fine-tuning the audience's specific expectations of relevance and can in this way profoundly influence the direction of the inferences that the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic guides. This comprehension heuristic is based on the communicative principle of relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1995) which says that every act of ostensive communication comes with an implicit claim that it is optimally relevant to the audience. This means that every utterance claims to provide the audience with the greatest improvements of their representation of the world without incurring unreasonable cognitive processing effort and considering the abilities and preferences of the communicator. Comprehending an utterance means finding a justification for this claim. The most straightforward way to do this is to transfer this general claim into a specific expectation of relevance: the audience is licensed to expect that the utterance is optimally relevant to the audience at the given time and circumstances. This specific relevance claim can be tested by accessing the most easily accessible interpretive hypothesis about explicit content, implicit import and contextual assumptions, and testing whether this interpretation satisfies the audience's specific expectations of relevance. If so, the relevance claim is true and the audience is justified to accept this interpretation as the one intended by the communicator. If not, the process should be repeated with the next easily accessible interpretation, continuing on a path of least effort until either an interpretation that satisfies the hearer's expectations of relevance is found or the search is abandoned.

Notice that the evaluation criterion in this comprehension heuristic is sensitive to the audience's expectations of relevance. These expectations are of course determined by the state of mind the audience is in when processing the ostensive stimulus. However, it would certainly be beneficial for communicators to influence the audience's expectations of relevance. Unger (2006) explores the idea that communicators can in fact give clues for inferences that fine-tune the audience's expectations of relevance and applies this to account for a whole variety of global coherence effects in discourse. One particular way of fine-tuning the audience's expectations of relevance is to clue the audience into accessing genre information. Genres are cultural concepts, providing encyclopaedic information about how one could expect a text to unfold. Cultural knowledge consists of mental

representations that are distributed over a group of individuals (Sperber 1996). Sperber argues that this distribution of knowledge can be explained on the basis of the cognitive principle of relevance: information that is repeatedly successful in explaining the behaviour of others gets activated again and again, and is therefore highly accessible. Cultural knowledge is therefore highly accessible in nature, and easy to access in the early stages of the utterance interpretation process where the fine-tuning of relevance expectations may be beneficial for the overall process.[7]

Lets consider the case of traditional stories in this framework. Each telling of a traditional story is an act of metarepresentation: the storyteller is producing a representation (the present telling of a story) which she is using in virtue of its resemblance to a representation that is attributed to the cultural heritage (the content and plot of the story being told). As reviewed in the previous section, reported evidentials essentially mark acts of metarepresentation as well: the speaker passes on to the hearer a representation—a thought—that she thinks resembles a thought someone else entertains. It follows that reported evidentials may be a good tool for storytellers to give clues to their audiences about the genre used. However, for reported evidentials to be recognized by audiences as having been employed for this genre-indicating function, it would be beneficial if they would be used in slightly unusual ways. An easy way to do this is to use evidentials in redundant ways. In this way the reported evidentials can be used effectively to ensure the audience access the genre information for establishing the relevance of the story, rather than merely to indicate the speaker's source of evidence. In Unger's (2011) terms, this amounts to an instance of redundant procedural marking. Another way to achieve this same effect might be to not use the evidential at all; this will give a clue to the audience that source indication is blatantly irrelevant. Source indication can be irrelevant only in contexts where the source is given by convention—as is the case in traditional stories.

As natural and plausible as this explanation may sound, it leaves several questions open. First, why are not reported evidentials as widely used to indicate other types of traditional texts such as poems or songs? Second, why do some languages not use this convention? This question is particularly interesting given

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7   In fact, the utterance interpretation process involves the parallel adjustment of explicit content, implicit import and contextual assumptions, as well as the calibration of relevance expectations, and does not procede in a serial fashion. However, for efficiency reasons it should be expected that the calibration of relevance expectations should occur in the earliest phases of the overall process. See Unger (2006:114-120) for further discussion.

that most languages that have evidentials follow this convention of indicating traditional narratives with hearsay evidentials. Those languages that do not follow this convention do so in stark contrast with other languages even in their linguistic areal, even in contrast with related languages. This makes an answer in terms of the variability of conventionalisation alone not very likely.

4.2   Narratives and epistemic vigilance

Traditional narratives are thriving in the life of a community: they are being told and retold many times. In Sperber's (1996) terms, they are "contagious" representations that have spread throughout a community. This means that they must be deemed relevant by the audience and must routinely pass the audience's epistemic vigilance. Otherwise they could not have become a part of the community's cultural knowledge. But traditional narratives are typically located in a fictitious and often mythical world. How, then, could they pass the audience's epistemic vigilance?

At this point, a simple observation can help us: traditional narratives often contain examples of what is considered good and bad behaviour by the standards of the cultural values and norms of the community. They may also contain examples of the relevance of a community's world view. Consider for example the story of "Little Red Riding Hood". Little Red Riding Hood does several things that are considered bad in Western cultures: she lingers on the way and does not promptly do what she is tasked to do, she talks to a stranger and lets herself be persuaded by him to change her course and thereby ignores her parent's warning. These bad actions have some very unfortunate consequences in the story. What happens to Little Red Riding Hood is basically an example of what can happen when one ignores certain cultural norms or values.

My claim is that these observations can be generalized to traditional narratives: they exemplify behaviour that conforms to or breaks with cultural values and norms and shows by example what consequences this behaviour may lead to. The interpretation appears to follow a pattern such as the following one:

(3)
   (a) What Little Red Riding Hood did was contrary to a cultural norm (e.g.: *do what your parents told you to do; don't let strangers persuade you to*

disobey your parents)

(b) That grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood end up in the wolf's stomach was caused by Little Red Riding Hood being persuaded by the wolf to do what she was not supposed to.

(c) Therefore Little Red Riding Hood could have avoided peril by following the cultural norm.

(d) If Little Red Riding Hood could have avoided peril by following the cultural norm, then normally others can do so as well.

(e) Everyone can avoid danger by following the cultural norm.

(f) Because of 3., 4. and 5., the cultural norm is valid and it is advisable to follow it.

By interpreting traditional narratives along this pattern, the audience will recognise how the story argues by way of example for the validity of cultural norms or values. This is plausibly how these stories may achieve relevance and can pass the audience's epistemic vigilance.[8] Obviously, the audience must apply this inference pattern again and again to interpret all the actions and events in a given story, and for all stories of this type. According to Unger (2006), this means that because the mind is organised to maximise information processing efficiency (as per the cognitive principle of relevance proposed by Sperber and Wilson 1995), this inference pattern will become conventionalised and integrated into the genre knowledge associated with the traditional narrative genre.

Notice that the inference pattern in (3) is incomplete as it stands. Moreover, the inference from (c) to (e) via assumption (d). is abductive in nature and is not automatically valid. Yet this pattern is typically used when examples are to be interpreted as arguments for a general claim. Mercier and Sperber (2009) argue that the mind is equipped with a host of heuristic inference procedures dedicated to a certain domain to allow efficient processing of relevant inferences. Following their line of reasoning, I propose that since processing examples advanced in arguments constitutes a domain that requires a common inference procedure, the mind is equipped with a dedicated heuristic procedure that takes specific features of argumentative examples as input and delivers conclusions to the general case as output (i.e., that takes care of the inference from (c) via (e) to (d). quickly and

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8   This is not to say that traditional narratives can not serve other functions in society as well. An anonymous referee pointed out that such narratives also help to create a group identity of members of a community and reinforce bonds among them.

spontaneously).

It follows from these considerations that the genre typical interpretation pattern triggered by traditional narratives makes use of the heuristic procedure for example processing provided by the argumentation module. This means that recognising a text as a traditional story will raise the activation level of a component of the argumentation module; and the more activated the argumentation module is, the better can the story be processed. In other words, the traditional narrative genre activates and depends upon the activation of the argumentation module. In this sense it can be said to have essentially an argumentation function.

5   Reported evidentials, argumentation and narratives

I have argued that traditional narratives (folk stories) have essentially an argumentation function. Their interpretation depends crucially on the contribution of the argumentation module to the overall utterance interpretation process. The higher the activation level of the argumentation module, the less costly it will be for the interpretation process to integrate the argumentation module's output into the interpretation process. I have already argued that the genre knowledge associated with traditional narratives (folk stories) contains a link to the argumentation module and hence raises its activation level. However, if there are linguistic indicators available that may raise the activation level of the argumentation module as a whole, or at least the argumentative example processing heuristic but not only other sub-procedures linked to it, then it will be desirable for both speaker and audience that they be used.

Prototypical reported evidentials that work like the Estonian quotative are such devices, according to Unger's (2012) analysis discussed above. This predicts that reported evidentials of this type can be used as indicators of the folk story genre. However, reported evidentials of the type represented by the Sissala particle *ré* do not have this effect. Neither do evidentials specialised for source indications based on a narrower subtype of metarepresentational use, because these will trigger specific argumentation patterns whereas the argumentation patterns involved in recognizing arguments by exemplification may be much more varied.

This hypothesis is confirmed by the Estonian and Sissala data. The quotative can indeed be used as 'tokens' of the folk story genre. Klaas illustrates this point with the following example:

(4)   *Surnud* ühel isandal naine ja *jätnud* maha kaksteist poega ja ühe tütrekese. Mõne aja pärast *hakanud* isa teist neidu armastama, nõida. See *öelnud*: "Tütar las jääb, aga oma pojad põleta kõik ära..." Isa *mõelnud* nii, *mõelnud* naa, ei *teadnud* mida ette võtta. Ja *öelnud* ta ühele oma teenrile...[9]

'They say that the wife of a master had died and had left behind twelve sons and a little daughter. After a while the father had fallen in love with another maid, a witch. She is said to have said "Let the daughter remain, but burn all your sons..." The father is said to have thought this way and that way and he didn't know what to do. And he is reported to have told his servant...' (example and translation from Klaas 1997, 89)[10]

Blass (1989, 1990) does not report a similar use of *ré* as genre indicator and confirms in personal communication (2012) that this particle cannot be used as genre indicator.

Other cross-linguistic evidence supports these observations. Recall Aikhenvald's (2004) comment that the non-firsthand evidential in Cree, Montagnais and Naskapi is not used as genre indicator. Aikhenvald (2004:314) reports that this evidential is used primarily for marking inferred evidentiality. This suggests that this evidential is likely to primarily have comprehension functions as a non-attributive metarepresentational use indicator, or alternatively, as triggering a more specialised evidential procedure linked to the argumentation module.

Similarly, the reported evidential is not used as a genre indicator in Nganasan. Aikhenvald (2004:314) comments that this evidential is used in "narratives describing something that the narrator learnt from particular people, most often the narrator's ancestors." This means that the Nganasan reported evidential triggers a rather specific procedure of epistemic assessment and therefore functions in a more specific way than typical reportative evidentials. That this evidential is not used as an indicator of the folk story genre follows from my hypothesis.

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9   The past quotative forms are indicated in italicised script.
10   Klass' translation attempts to render the quotative forms by English hearsay expressions and is therefore not a natural rendering.

6 Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed the question of why there is such a strong tendency in languages with grammaticalised evidentiality to use the reported or hearsay evidential as a conventional indicator of the traditional narrative (folk story) genre. I have argued that this is because both the traditional narrative genre and typical reported evidentials have an inherent argumentation function. Typical reported evidentials do not merely indicate metarepresentational use in the sense of Blass (1989, 1990), but also activate a whole range of cognitive heuristic processes dedicated to argumentation, or in other words, raise the activation level of the argumentation module in Mercier and Sperber's (2009) sense. The genre information associated with traditional genres similarly triggers a processing pattern that crucially relies on heuristic procedures provided by the argumentation module. It follows that linguistic indicators such as typical reported evidentials that raise the activation level of the argumentation module as a whole are ideally suited as genre indicators of traditional narratives. Some languages have untypical reported evidentials that do not encode a trigger of the argumentation module. Interestingly, these evidentials are not used as genre indicators.

This analysis shows that the use of evidentials as genre indicators can be predicted from their linguistic semantics as triggers of cognitive procedures related not only to comprehension but also to argumentation. It follows that analyses of evidentials that only look at their comprehension function are seriously defective. This in turn provides strong confirmation for Wilson's (2011) claim that evidentials must be studied with respect to their argumentation function, and for Unger's (2012) claim that evidentials may combine comprehension and argumentation functions in various ways. But it provides a strong challenge to existing formal semantic theories of evidentials which are designed to only look at issues in the comprehension of the meaning conveyed by evidentials.

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Terms for Index

reported evidential
hearsay
Sissala
Estonian
argumentation
argumentation module
comprehension
comprehension module
example
traditional narrative
folk story
heuristic
procedure
metarepresentational use
metarepresentation
interpretation
genre
activate
activation level
trigger
cultural norm
cultural value
epistemic vigilance
persuasion