

Evidentiality as information access: Evidence from Yurakaré

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Evidentiality is commonly defined as "a linguistic category whose primary meaning is source of information" (Aikhenvald 2004:3). The problem with this definition is that "source" is not used as a technical term and thus is left undefined, which results in an imprecise definition. Using data from Yurakaré (unclassified, Bolivian foothills), I will argue for a more precise definition of evidentiality in terms of "information access". This definition involves four components: a speaker, a source, a process of accessing, and a proposition. In this model, the source is an event observed or experienced by the speaker. The proposition is a statement made by the speaker which is in some way connected to the source. I will argue that the grammatical category of evidentiality specifies the type of information access, by which I mean the process through which the speaker arrives from the observed event (the source) at the information given in the proposition. For example, the category of Visual evidence encodes that the event was visually perceived, i.e. accessed through visual perception by the speaker. In this case, the event described in the proposition is identical to the observed event. The category of Inferential evidence encodes that the speaker accessed the information given in the proposition through the mental process of interpreting a source event. The event described in the proposition is in this case different from the source event but still connected to it.