Evidentiality and the interpretation of Fluid-S case-marking

This paper examines the evidential dimension of case-marking in Northern Pomo, a moribund Hokan language of California (described in O'Connor 1992), which displays a Fluid-S case-marking system. A number of unaccusative verbs permit either nominative or accusative case on their subjects. For certain verbs, the choice of subject case signals the speaker's evidential basis for the assertion. We examine the semantics and pragmatics of this case-marking phenomenon and its interaction with logophoricity and verbal evidential marking, suggesting that the evidential pragmatics of case in Northern Pomo arise as a function of verbal semantics and are sensitive to the indexical value of speaker/point-of-view center.

Evidentiality and case As in other Fluid-S systems (e.g. Tsova-Tush/Batsbi, Eastern Pomo), Northern Pomo unergative verbs require nominative case on their subjects, while many unaccusative verbs allow either nominative <u>or</u> accusative case on their subjects. In this paper we focus our discussion on a subclass of Fluid-S internal experience verbs (Class 2 in O'Connor 1992). These verbs name events of physical or mental process or experience (e.g. *blush, sneeze, urinate, hiccup, feel disgust, feel pleasure, feel pain, understand…*). The nature of the internal experiences named by these verbs gives rise to an evidential contrast that is reflected in the choice of subject case. In a prototypical instance of internal experience, the experiencer possesses a kind of direct, unsharable first-hand evidence that the event took place. When the *speaker* has this kind of direct evidence, the subject of the experience verb is marked accusative. Many internal experiences may also be observed indirectly (e.g. *hiccup, sneeze*); when only indirect evidence of the experience is available to the speaker, the subject of the experience verb is marked nominative. This evidential contrast gives rise to what looks like a person split in these verbs' case behavior: 1st person subjects are preferentially coded as accusative, but 3rd person subjects are, in simple elicitation contexts, always coded as nominative.

1a) ṯo: dit^{h}ale
1s.Acc be.sick
I'm sick! (expressive; whining)

1b) mo:w dit^{h}ale
3sm.Nom be.sick
He's sick. (matter of fact; report)

With first person subjects, utterance speaker and experiencer are one and the same. Therefore, since the speaker/experiencer typically has direct internal evidence of the experience, case marking is generally accusative. When the speaker does *not* have this type of evidence about the experience, however, accusative is unavailable, as for instance in a case where a sick person awakes and utters *I must have vomited*. For the experience of third parties, this kind of indirect evidence is the norm, and accordingly, the default case is nominative. The utterance speaker does not generally have the right kind of evidence about the third person's internal experience to assign an accusative of direct evidence.

Expressive meaning requires accusative; nominative implies report The evidential meaning carried by accusative case with internal experience verbs gives rise to expressive meaning. Use of the accusative allows for expressive force of whatever kind is appropriate for the predicate--for *be sick* it is negative, for *experience pleasure* it is positive. Generally, expressive elements rely on internal experience or affect/emotion of the speaker. In contrast, use of the nominative case for subjects of internal experience verbs implies a lack of direct evidence and thus a distanced, external report that the event took place, as in (1b). When the nominative is used for first person subjects, as in (1c), the expressive quality seen in (1a) disappears. We propose that this is because sentences with nominative subjects of internal experience verbs (1b, 1c) do not claim any special internal experience for the speaker. Instead, these simply assert the existence of an event.

1c) ?a: dit^{h}al-ye
1s.Nom be.sick-past
I was sick. (answer to "why weren't you at school?")

Accusative 3rd person licensed by indexical shift To assign accusative case to the subject of an internal experience verb, the speaker needs direct evidence of the subject's internal experience. Under normal evidential conditions, this should not be possible with a 3rd person subject. There are, however, environments in which accusative case can be assigned to 3rd persons. We propose that these cases involve indexical shifting, and thus that the accusative of direct evidence encodes a shiftable indexical dependence on the speaker. Evidence for indexical shifting comes from the logophoric system, in which special 3rd person forms depend on a context encoding 3rd person point of view (see Schlenker 2003). In a logophoric context, as in (2), the accusative case is licensed on the 3rd person (logophoric) subject of an internal experience verb. Here it is the 3rd person point-of-view center, and not the overall speaker, who has direct internal evidence of the internal experience.

2) ṯı ṯı yaṯṯa hın mo:w he
3s.Log.Acc vomit Comp 3sm.Nom say
He$_j$ said he$_j$ was vomiting.

A similar shift to 3rd person point of view occurs in cases where the speaker wishes to express empathy or heightened dramatic effect through increased expressiveness (as noted in free translations below).

3a) mo:wal ma:dal nisi
3sm.Acc 3sf.Acc abhor
Ugh, she just can't <u>stand</u> him.

3b) mo:wal yaṯṯa
3sm.Acc vomit
Ohh, he's vomiting, poor thing!

We propose that such cases also involve indexical shifting in the evidential meaning, despite the absence of an overt attitude or speech predicate. By taking a 3rd person's point of view and laying claim to her direct internal experience, the overall speaker again brings out point-of-view-linked expressive content.

Interactions with verbal evidentials In addition to evidential uses of case-marking, Northern Pomo has a set of verbal evidential morphemes realized as verbal affixes or particles, including the categories of hearsay, inference, and direct sensory evidence. These markers are not embeddable, except in direct quotation. By contrast to the evidential accusative, which displays a shiftable indexicality (3a, 3b, 4a), the verbal evidential morphemes are incompatible with point-of-view shifting. Not only can they not be shifted to pick up a 3rd person point of view, they *cannot appear* in utterances in which the speaker has assigned accusative case to a 3rd person internal experience verb subject (4b, 4c). This contrasts with the behavior of 1st person indexicals in Northern Pomo, which, while not subject to shifting, can nevertheless appear in logophoric environments, (5).

4a) ma:dal ši?učí?
3sf.Acc forget
She forgot!

4b) * ma:dal ši?učí? -na tilna
3sf.Acc forget -Inferential.Evid. Dubit.
I guess she must have forgotten.

4c) * ma-phane ṯı ṯı pašil-kan mo:wal yaṯṯa -do
log.poss-daughter 3sLog.Acc poison-caus.adverb 3sm.Acc vomit -HearsayEvid.
Because his$_j$ daughter poisoned him$_j$, he$_j$ vomited, I heard.

5) ?a:mi-phane ṯı ṯı k'a:-nam mo:w maxoye
1poss-daughter 3sLog.Acc leave-Def 3sm.Nom regret
He$_j$ regrets that my daughter left him$_j$.

We hypothesize that the inability of verbal evidentials to appear in environments where indexical shifting is in play explains their resistance to embedding, given that embedding triggers quantification over contexts (Schlenker 1999, 2003) or context shift (Anand and Nevins 2004).

Implications We explore three implications of the Northern Pomo evidential case facts. First, that evidentiality may be expressed via a case system tied to specific verbs demonstrates that evidential markers are not a natural class, grammatically speaking (Faller 2004). Second, our findings show that evidential markers have an indexical component to their meaning and interact with indexical-shifting in ways that may have important consequences both for their meaning and for their grammatical distribution. Finally, our results call attention to the need for investigation of the link between evidentiality and the lexical semantics of particular verb classes, some of which may give rise to evidential contrasts in virtue of the types of events they name.