Evidentiality through reported speech: Pragma-linguistic factors affecting its reliability

Edona Jahiu[*]

University of Prishtina, Albania

Abstract: This study focuses on reportative evidential that contains statements of a specific and commonly known individual with interlocutors regarding the quality of evidence s/he claimed to have, his/her trustworthiness as a person, linguistic markers, turn designs, emotional state, epistemic authority, as factors which determine the reliability of information vouched through reported speech. We collected 28 conversations in which informants were asked to convey information derived from someone well or weakly known. Topics were chiefly related to events expected to occur, films and other informative assertions. Then, respondents delivered their main reasons about (not) trusting the reported speech/speaker and regarding the modals within RS or in the assessment part. They were urged to share common conclusions about its reliability. We found out that epistemological assessment of reported speech originally derived by a well-known person is crucially related to the reported speaker's usual shown sincerity, words chosen, while of a weakly known individual with his/her competency and quality of evidence, which can define the information as "first-hand" or not worth considering.

Keywords: Reported speech, commonly known author, sincerity, quality of evidence, epistemological assessment

1. Introduction

The source where information is based may be transmitted either directly: by speaker's firsthand knowledge: perceptualized through vision, audio (when speaker himself heard original information) or indirectly: through reports/hearsays (quotative or paraphrase), inference by reasoning events, facts etc. (Aikhenvald 2018, 2014, 2003, Mushin 2001a, 2001b, Yildiz 2021, Fitneva 2001, Willett 1988). Though the reportative evidential is categorized generally in the "indirect" and "non-eyewitness" class, which implies that "the speaker heard about the action from some secondary source" (Aikhenvald 2003:3), it can be either distorted, misinterpreted or recontextualized (Tannen 2007, Mañoso-Pacheco 2019, Holt 1996, McGlone & Baryshevtsev 2018, Sternberg 1982, Buttny 1997), or might be highly reliable if was uttered by a trustworthy or competent person (Mushin 2001a, Fitneva 2001, DeBois 1986, Ishida 2006, Kamio 1994).

Locke (1690) defined witnessing from a report as a "weak testimony", which is mainly prohibited in court due to classification as inadmissible evidence[1] (Murphy 1989); thus, many times is admonished to be ignored (Ho Lee et al. 2005), and this estimation towards it, reduce its force. Despite evident shortcomings, it is demonstrated with widespread use in legal settings (Lee 2010,

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[*] Corresponding Author: edona95@hotmail.com
[1] Exemption make the "exited utterances" made in startling conditions (Andrus 2009), or dying declarations (Ho Lee et al. 2005)

Galatolo 2007). "Distrust of reported speech is often paired with a valuing of the 'original' sensory experience of the event" (Andrus 2009:320), which is more reliable and gives the speaker more responsibility for alleged utterance than just drawing attention to transmitting words as the only relying evidence.

However, reported speech's propositional content (in direct and indirect form) attributed to someone else encompasses components through which a somewhere-based attitude may be formed, referred to, summarized and supported. Its employment is proven to be That's why languages such as Tibetian, Cora etc., are even expressed grammatically. For instance, in Saaroa (language in Taiwan), reported evidentiality is marked by enclitic *-ami* (Chia-jung Pan 2014:97), in Quechua with *–shi* (Floyd 1997, Nucknolls 2014, Weber 1986)*,* and in Enga with -na; sentence finals to indicate interpretations, e.g. as hearsays with *–tte* in Japanese (Mushin 2001b), *-wi* in Sherpa (Givon 1982) or by separated lexical constructions as in English, French, Catalan (Söderqvist 2020:9, Aikhenvald 2003, González et al. 2017) and Albanian Language. In these languages, adverbs: *apparently, seemingly,* or verbs like: *see, hear,* inform about the origin of information they claim to know. However, in its core evidential meaning, "the speaker has no direct evidence for the assertion…, but bases his assertion on someone else's saying" (Etxepare 2010:606, see Aikhenvald 2006:324).

In this article, we will consider cases when speakers report someone else's statements (which, in many cases contained within an evidential or epistemic modal with a different scale of certainty) and evaluate the veracity of the reported speech, taking into account the speaker's sincerity, utterance design, competence, psycho-emotional state, the evidence presented and other signs that according to a reporter, were evident/articulated or happened in the context where the reported speech was being uttered. Through these linguistic choices and socio-psychological sources, in each conversation, interlocutors conveyed the common personal evaluation regarding veracity after negotiating the reliability of the overall information. By measuring the (non)relevance of each factor and analysing some related conversation turns, we discovered which variable influenced determining whether the original speaker was sincere while conveying information. In addition, we found out that the assessment of whether RS is reliable is also driven by epistemic modals' character: how they are operationalized within the report or by their absence (which implied certainty in our case).

The language used in the corpus is Albanian, the evidentiality of which was treated in some aspects by Friedman (2012), who regarded its admirative usage to create distance from the information being conveyed (especially derived through dubitative sources) to indicate unexpected occurrences or sarcastic meaning etc. However, his focus did not specifically deal with its features in conversational interaction, nor other personality factors influencing reported speech believability.

This article also contributes to developing the more recent perspective of evidentiality's role in shaping interaction (see the volume edited by Janis Nuckolls & Lev Michael 2014, Cornillie 2010, Sakita 2002) where the evidential chosen, turn designs, determine the 'shape' of upcoming discourse and the conversational inferences.

2. Literature review

2.1. 2. Someone's statements as evidence

When speakers include reported speech in their talk, whether in direct or indirect type[2], they pretend to adapt the original previous speech of someone, among other things, to base their attitude or acts on something (as evidence/demonstration), give vividity and dramatization to their story, to show epistemic authority, enact identities, the highlight event of a story and for its rhetorical role in discourse (Larson 1977, Buttny 1997, Berger & Doehler 2015, Rae & Kerby 2007, Mushin 2014, Tannen 2007, Sidnell 2006) or may be interrelated with attitude to the information quoted, e.g. in Arizona Teha (Aikhenvald 2018:5). These functions are achieved by entailing and mixing two 'cropped' contexts: 1. Data when the statement was originally uttered and 2. The actual (accessible) setting, speakers, domain etc.[3] The words reported are tied with the relevant purpose of the reporter (to inform, convince, upset, delight the hearer(s)), who is mostly aware of potential inferences and connotations and has a more expanded view about certain points which comprise the common epistemic ground, cues of the previous talk with the hearer etc.

Notwithstanding its second-hand nature, which marks its dubitative character and the fact that it is not touchable evidence, but only information obtained through words of someone, when "the reported evidential is used, the addressee is not supposed to ask 'how do you know this?'" (Pan 2014:105), meaning that words have their power to serve as a useful support to present a reality, and "hold someone responsible".

Thereby, reported evidential is one of the interactional sources when S, through conveying previously spoken/written discourse, intends to take/show an attitude; summarize, support or report a thought/viewpoint because s/he has a linguistic material which serves as 'deictic' relation with another speech event and perspective. "A reportive evidential is then an element that justifies the use of a proposition P by a speaker S, by evoking the notion of a source completely unrelated to S from which P originated, thus signalling that S had only indirect access to P" (Vanderbiesen 2014:171). This means that its content is attributed to another original author, who is accountable about the statement according to the reporter. Therefore, "reported speech is an extra narrative evidential strategy that shifts the deictic centre to the original telling of the story" (Mushin 2001b:1380, see Hanks 2014:10), though reporter's personal perspective cannot fully separate it, perception, interpretation, and evaluation (Tannen 2007, Nuckolls 2008, Buttny 1997).

We aim to elaborate on the pragma-linguistic factors which urge interlocutors (not) to believe someone's utterance after consulting his/her individual characteristics, deception cues and other related circumstances. The reason multiple factors are at play is that there is not a direct sensory experience in the case of reporting discourse, which would make the evidence undisputable or sufficient basis for uniform interpretation.

3. Quality of evidence at reportative evidentials

Definition of an utterance as reportative evidential or, more precisely, reported speech doesn't indicate the same degree of the quality of it as evidence, its trustworthiness, neither generalizes its function in communication only as a mere transmission of someone's words, meaning that the hearer

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[2] As it is beyond the scope of this study, we won't pay too much attention to the type of reported speech which is constructually deployed, rather we'll only consider the linguistic evidence as mechanism which is assessed differently depending on epistemic or psychological factors.

[3] This classification may be substituted by the division made by Lee (2010:61): the reported event and the secondary reporting context

may view them as an effort to convince/him, to relate it with personal thought/story etc. That is why authors had many classifications and discussions (Aikhenvald 2004, Mañoso-Pacheco 2019, Willett 1988, Brugman & Macaulay 2015). The main problem consists of the difference between quotation, hearsay and report, additional meanings, and identification of the author(s) on the report. Even though all of these types serve as information sources (by picking past speech to claim a kind of evidence), there are parameters which distinguish their quality and reliability from one another. For instance, according to Vanderbiesen (2014:173) distinction between quotation and the report is the opposition between justification and attribution.   This attribution contains the endeavours of the speaker to convince the hearer, not about RS's validity but the factuality of its occurrence.

   Whichever the content of the proposition displayed or other source claimed, "…as speakers and writers, we make meaning and commit ourselves to a piece of information by providing the status and source of information with the ultimate goal of making a reliable, truthful and relevant contribution to the interactive process…" (González et al. 2017:70).

   However, reproducing words increases the possibility of distorting original testimony (McGlone & Baryshevtsev 2018) since they are unverifiable completely (if the event was not video-recorded or strongly documented somehow) and "the original teller is the primary deictic centre" (Mushin 2001b:1380), not the speaker him/herself, who has a secondary role on accountability (related with an accuracy of content reported).

   As we shall argue, the reliability is commingled with a larger array of issues than merely linguistic or functional roles. *Who* is the *animator* and the *author* is important in determining RS's trustworthiness. Consider an example by Kamio (1994:78) - who introduced the term 'territory of information," which assumes that territory is also present in the cognitive state of knowledge - where Taroo's father has not seen his son and the only source of information that he had was a call from his wife:

   (1) Taroo is ill

   As we see, the reporting verb is absent, and information is given in *direct form,* though has been derived by someone else. "The absence of a reporting verb indicates that the speaker acquires the role of the author in opposition to the principal" (Ivanova 2013:84). One such feature is not related to a "lapse" or effort to 'grab' the epistemic authority. Rather, it is guided by numerous social factors interacting with each other. According to Kamio (1994:78), "one might here point out that since the source of information is his wife, who is a very reliable source, Taroo's father received information which is as reliable as any he could have directly perceived" (see also Ishida 2006). In circumstances when the author is mentioned, "they shift responsibility for the truth of the information to the reported speaker, essentially washing their own hands of the affair" (Mushin 2001a:22). This implies that the absence of reporting verbs and author's name while consciously conveying someone else's speech, is a strong reliability marker and an index about recognizing the virtues or epistemic/evidential authority of original author over the issue – where speaker leaves the open option of interpretation as if the statement is his/hers. When the reporting part is present, in contrast to example (1), "reported speech, or a reportive evidential marker, is clearly used to distance a speaker from information" (Mushin 2014:115). Inter alia, the speaker "does not want to be on record as firmly committed to the proposition in case it turns out to be controversial" (Coates 1987:120), and by this choice, s/he shifts accountability somewhere else.

4. Data and method

Our data consists of 28 conversations of 56 respondents aged 17-23. They were urged to tell a quotation to each other either in direct or indirect speech, originally derived by a well or weakly known person, discuss it and share the evaluation of its veracity. Conversations were unfolded in Prishtina (Kosovo): in a café, bar or classroom, following the instructions of the author, but without her presence, to retain commodity, and avoid distractions while sharing information and subjective opinions.

In many cases, while analyzing data, required efforts to capture the 'sociolectal codes' used while describing original authors, but the conversational inferences were clear and in coherence with the main factor, which was selected as crucial. 15 conversations were reporting a well-known person by both parts, 13 of them a more distant person. The interaction also contained interlocutors' attitude towards propositions, described events etc., which served to elicit inferences whether the original speaker is being trusted or is deeply contested. As Sakita (2002:1) claims, persons "not only report utterances, but also talk about utterances by commenting on, criticizing, or questioning them". According to Buttny (1997:484), "such evaluative components are useful methodologically in that they allow us to hear how the speaker wants the recipient(s) to take the actions and persons portrayed through the reported speech".

After delivering the conversations with disputants, we elected main pragma-linguistic and psychological resources, which signalled the truthfulness of a statement. More specifically, we elicited information about:
A) Honesty of the reported speaker (as interlocutors know him/her)

B) Epistemic authority/presence of epistemic modals

C) Quality of evidence

D) Psycho-emotional state of original speaker

They had to select only one crucial factor in each conversation and others to classify as relevant or non-relevant. And in the end, they were asked to deliver a common conclusion regarding its reliability. This assignment increased discussion among participants, as "reportive forms are also associated with contexts of misalignment and disagreement between people, where interactants may have conflicting attitudes towards information" (Mushin 2014:107).

Taking into account this data, we measured and indexed the main and secondary variables which validate or discount the reported speech. Since the usage of epistemic modals had a salient effect on envisaging reliability, we also considered their presence/distribution within the report. We compared it with the modals in the evaluative part of the conversation, to show if there was any alignment of epistemic assessment expressed through modals in these two main parts.

4.1 Research questions and hypothesis

We aim to give feedback on two main questions:

1. Which pragma-linguistic factor makes more reliable the reportative evidence originally stated by well-known authors, and which one by weakly known authors?

2. Is the usage of certainty and uncertainty epistemic markers within RS or in the assessment part related to the trustworthiness of the reported speech?

The hypothesis of the study:

1. Quality of evidence and sincerity are vital in judging the believability of speech derived from commonly known.
2. When certainty epistemic markers are within the speech reported, respondents take the original author's statement more seriously.

5. Results

5.1. Main determinative factors of RS's reliability

Although not at the same level, "evidential contribute to the truth conditions" (Murray 2017:73) (though not in the veracity of utterance: see Aikhenvald 2018) as they carry a weight of supportive evidence which shows that the speaker isn't representing merely assumptions by imagining something but can demonstrate his/her assertions as real with different evidence quality.

Many socio-psychological and pragma-linguistic factors open space to determine the viewpoint concerning the veracity of reported speech, especially when the original author is socially close to interlocutors, because "persons know more about relatives, friends…" (Heritage 2012:6), and this provides material to judge more correctly the utterance's truth value, inferences etc.

We elicited the data about the presumptive level of sincerity of the reported speaker, his/her competency, and linguistic constructions to encounter particular signals that indicate the reasons for their conclusion. Then, they were asked to tell whether personality, epistemic authority etc., in each case, affects more or less their estimation.

Using SPSS, we gave each of these variables three values: 1-crucial, 2-relevant, and 3-irrelevant. Respondents evaluated each of these factors together in every conversation by determining only one as crucial, while others as relevant or irrelevant.

Results were conducted after analyzing 15 conversations reporting a well-known person, 13 a weakly-known individual.

Table 1. Factors' **degree of relevance according to respondents' evaluation**

	Crucial factor	*Relevant*	*Irrelevant*	*Total*
Well-known author (N=15)				
Epistemic authority/epistemic modals	3 (20%)	8 (53.3%)	4 (26.6%	15
Personality (usual (in)sincerity)	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	0 (0%)	15
Quality of evidence	3 (20%)	5 (33.3%)	7 (46.6%)	15
Psycho-emotional state	0 (0%)	8 (53.3%)	7 (46.6%)	15
Weakly known person (N=13)				

Epistemic authority/ epistemic modals	6 (46.1%)	6 (46.1%)	1 (7.6%)	13
Personality (usual (in)sincerity)	0 (0%)	4 (30.7%)	9 (69.2%)	13
Quality of evidence	6 (46.1%)	7 (53.8%)	0 (0%)	13
Psycho-emotional state	1 (7.6%)	6 (46.1%)	6 (46.1%)	13

Multivariate MANOVA (when factors were considered jointly) shows there was a significant difference between well-known and weakly known authors of the reported utterance: $F_{(4, 23)} =$ 14.74, p<0.001, eta^2=.720

A separated ANOVA has found difference between well and weakly known authors on relevance of personality (their conviction about sincerity): $F_{(1, 26)}$ =47.47, p=0.001, eta .64, in quality of evidence: $F_{(1, 26)}$ =7.89, p<0.009 eta^2=.89. However there wasn't significant difference in importance of epistemic authority: $F_{(1, 26)}$ =3.07, p<0.09, eta2 =.106 and psycho-emotional state: $F_{(1, 26)}$ =.47, p<.71 eta .005.

Results suggest that while reporting a close person, they were far more focused on the author's usual sincerity (personality type), categorised as either crucial (most cases) or relevant to the final decision of evaluating veracity. Their focus in such circumstances (when a close person is being reported) is firstly shifted on the honesty patterns rather than other epistemic/evidential pragma-linguistic indexes[4]. That's why in many turns, the name of the original speaker and reporting verb weren't necessary mentioned, as it was considered already worth being taken as *fact*. Thus, "if the speaker obtains a piece of information from a reliable source (for example, a family member), then he or she could use the direct form, that is, a form without an overt evidential marker when conveying that information to another person" (Ishida 2006:1285) On the other side, "if the reported speaker is known to be an untrustworthy gossip then the hearer might infer that the speaker is dubious of the truth of the information" (Mushin 2001a:22). Other factors such as epistemic authority and quality of evidence, had crucial importance while evaluating the reliability of an utterance by a weakly known subject, as they lacked the previous experience that would serve as basis indication/impression about probability, to be honest.

5.2. Factors' manifestation in interaction

In this subsection, following the conversations, we will briefly consider the abovementioned factors.

Personality (usual (in) sincerity), commonly known traits: honesty/dishonesty.

Personality is one of the main assets which displays the combination of an individual's behavioural, cognitive/emotional patterns and remains a valuable source to quickly assess the potential intentions, desires, and inferences a person may carry. Moreover, "personality is useful in describing, explaining, and predicting differences among individuals" (Larsen et al. 2018:6), meaning that individual characteristics are considered and evaluated differently for each person. This gave

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[4] However, considerable epistemic significance played modals used by original speakers, which were relevant on in/decreasing the matter of doubt. At persons who were categorized as honest, they treated the information in coherence with the author's certainty, while at 'liars' as exaggerated or minimized certainty.

especially usable clues when respondents spent considerable time with a person and when his/her seriousness and sincerity have been detected/proved several times in particular topics.

The sincerity condition: "A intends to do B" (Searle 1969), which "invariably specifies a psychological state" (Burkhardt 2010:137), in our context, is interpreted as "the original author purported to convey the truth[5]".

Let's consider examples:

(2) *Relevant data: Erza is only a colleague of the respondents*

F: Erza tha që ↑po planifiko:n me ha::p ni grup ku na inform<u>on</u> për ↑rezultatet e pro<u>vi</u>meve

Erza said she's planning to open a closed group where she'll inform us of all exam results

S: =Pra, po regjistro:hemi menih<u>er</u>

So we'll register immediately

F: >Po s'kena nevo:j tash me shk<u>u</u> nfakult<u>et</u>

Yea, we don't need to go to faculty anymore

Reliability: True, Reason: Personality

As the respondents chose 'personality" as the determiner of trustworthiness, tells that the immediate voluntary of S to join Erza's group on social media doesn't have to do with authority or the sources she might have, as she isn't a professor or a person with higher position hired to deliver information. Rather, it had to do with a mental image of the consistent honesty of Erza. Moreover, she is their colleague with the same resources and access to exam results as them, and the claimed unnecessity to attend directly to the faculty to get informed about these results speaks itself of their undisputable trust in her – cultivated through experience.

On the other side, someone with a misleading portrait is assumed to exaggerate facts or lying:
(3) *Relevant data: Ben is a common, well-known friend of interlocutors*

T:Be<u>ni</u> tha: që <u>du</u>het me shku: ama ↑garant s<u>o</u> oblige:m

Ben said we must go, but probably it's not an obligation

F:S'ka: <u>sha</u>nca m'u kon obli<u>gim</u>

No chance to be an obligation

Osht fe:st

It's a party

Reliability: False   Reason: Personality/honesty

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[5] This implies that the honesty of the reporter wasn't disputable issue. Respondents were required to report parts of speech they really heard, and only comment the possibility of their happening.

The modal verb *must,* which is attributed to Ben as an author, indicates that he has suggested that attending the event is an obligation. However, in her "discussion part", T, though using uncertainty modal *probably,* implicates that Ben "exaggerates" the issues. In such a case, the inherent formal meaning of employed modal *must* is understood well semantically by both parts but isn't taken into consideration due to their focus on Ben's usual honesty. Thus, they often presuppose the reported speaker's intentions based on these demonstrated traits. Moreover, F uses a logical assumption: *a party can't be an obligatory event*, which forces their doubts to increase. As Fitneva (2001:403) states: "if speakers' interests and sincerity are suspect, everything they say would be judged as untrustworthy and filtered out…if speakers are truthful and trustworthy, the hearer will conserve cognitive resources by relying on the speaker's evaluation of the information".

The reason this data grants accurate associations of whether the author was sincere is that "personality is a pattern of relatively permanent traits and unique characteristics that give both consistency and individuality to a person's behaviours" (Feist & Feist 2006:4). This factor is shown as essential on qualifying the validity of speeches uttered by well-known individuals.

Epistemic authority. Epistemic status is "*omnipresent* in interaction" (Drew 2018:168 italics in original), whether in turn designs or in the common presumed knowledge between participants. When someone is known to have more expertise and the right to assess or declare something, his/her opinion/assertion is valued highly and receives more attention, as hearers regard him/her as more productive/competent on the issue. This has been proved in studies of different settings (Drew 2018, Heritage 2012, 2013, Wu 2018, Mondada 2013, Bolden 2013).

In (4), interlocutors are evidently aware about Anita's K+ position:

(3) *Context: Anita is organizer of volleyball tournament*

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H:Anita tha: që kemi prova qet ↑jav
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Anita said we'll have rehearsals this week

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F: =Pra pe caktojm ko:hën
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So we're making the schedule

Declared reliability: True   Reason: Epistemic authority

Respondents did not claim to have a close relationship with Anita, except for their duty to communicate to her about organizational issues in sports. Her position as a host on the committee of the school tournament gives her the right to decide and inform them correctly. This urges them to consider her as an entitled person, take her words seriously, and act according to them without adding too many subjective attitudes or showing hints of epistemic struggle, as they also know that in the case of dishonesty, she would discredit her reputation, and moreover, don't find any reasons to suspect on this professional information.

In many cases, epistemic stance depended on the quality of evidence that was assumed according to author's claim. Their relationship has turned out to be an important and very discussed issue

(Yildiz 2021, González et al. 2017). Our conversations showed that hearers were principally focused to uncover the access or contact the original author had and then to commentate whether it was employed sincerely or not.

In line with this dichotomy, in the example below, though the respondents claimed they ultimately decided to trust Rita because of her competency (presence on the scene), there is actually an intersection between evidence inferred and epistemic authority, where the former gives validation to the second.

(5) *Context: Rita started talking about grades in math, which caused a severe quarrel between two girls*

D: Rita ⬆tha që u pendu ia ka ⬆nis qasaj te:me tmatemati:kës se ska pa kurr gri::ndje ma tegër?

Rita said she is repented about initiating the topic of math, as never saw such a severe fight after that

F: Po:: sigurt kokan rre:h

So surely they have beaten each other

Declared reliability: True   Reason: Epistemic authority

Rita's knowledge about the conflict that occurred is gained by her visual evidence; thus, first-hand access signals her right (as she initiated the topic that caused the fight) and epistemic authority on the matter. Moreover, visual experience "may also be part of a claim to a high degree of epistemic authority over the information" (Mushin 2014:104), serving as a key insight to receiving interlocutors' attention as competent/appropriate person at issue at hand.

This shows narrow relation between *type of access* and *degree of knowledge* which "is reconciliation between source and attitude" (Mushin 2014). What differentiates evidentiality from epistemic stance is that the former "does not bear any straightforward relationship to truth, the validity of a statement, or the speaker's responsibility (Aikhenvald 2006:320). Thus, "evidentiality is a category in its own right, and not a subcategory of epistemic or some other modality" (Aikhenvald 2003:1). Because of their commonalities in being very close interpretably with knowledge, according to Vanderbiesen (2014:169) evidentiality is epistemic (as it deals with knowledge), but not epistemic-modal as it does not by definition comment on the veracity of knowledge. Also, Boye (2012:2) states that both epistemic modality and evidentiality fall in the epistemic category. However, they differ basically in terms of how the speaker evaluates the state of knowledge or degree of assurance (epistemics), the manner/source of acquisition, and the type of access s/he had to it (evidentiality). In the example above, their 'coordination' and differentiation is manifested through *seeing* and *surely* – suggesting that visual evidence implies assurance.

Quality of evidence of original speaker. Reported speeches' reliability, precisely at weakly known persons, was mainly supported by the assessment of quality/clarity of evidence within RS (source which original speaker claimed to have).

Consider below cases which are 'cropped' parts of conversations (in the sense that some irrelevant comments are not displayed) where both evaluations of validity are based on reportive evidential but with a difference in the quality of the author's identification:

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(5) Eria said she has seen the film. She must know the epilogue.

(6) Elias told me that he heard Maria will get married. God
knows if that's true.
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In the first example, the speaker claims the type of evidential reported speaker chose. As part of the speaker's comment, the certainty modal *must* + the epistemic verb, *know,* elucidate indirectly that seeing a film (which pragma-linguistically means understanding the messages it gives, the epilogue) is a quite reliable source to take the information seriously. This evidence doesn't need further justification. However, this 'evidence' isn't taken for granted. It includes much more weight than facts presented only verbally, as it also involves the author's trustworthiness.

In (2), the speaker indirectly reports Elias's assertion that Maria will get married. The evidential part *said she had heard* gives clues about the lower possibility to be regarded as true compared to the former because the source where information was heard isn't specified and turns to be supported only by hearsay. This suggests that "the way the speaker/writer attains the knowledge affects to what extent the knowledge is reliable" (Yildiz 2021:127). That's why this narrow relation incented researchers to regard them as deeply involved with each other.

Psycho-emotional state. This factor is not easily verifiable, as it has to do with the *assumed state* of the author in the reported context, which may have influenced her speech, content, turn designs and presence of certain illocutionary acts. Thus, it's not a permanent nor constant trait, as "a person may be angry now, but not tomorrow or may be angry in one situation, but not in others" (Larsen et al. 2018:7). Psycho-emotional state is influenced by social interaction, topic, personality varying degree of intensity and is gender-sensitive (Golovey et al. 2019).

A notable feature of this factor is its *temporary effect* that an event might have triggered, hurting/exiting words or may be an emotional reaction after mentioning 'sensible' issues for the hearer, restricted within certain topics. E.g.:

(7) *Context: Tina (weakly-known person) talked with G and other girls (closer to her) a few hours after breaking up with her boyfriend*

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G: Mas ↑nda:mjes Tina tha: që ska me bo: ma ↑frajer?
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After her break-up Tina said she'll never have a boyfriend again
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H: Ta sho:him mas dy muje
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Let's see after two months

Declared reliability: False   Reason: Psycho-emotional state

The reason this RS was qualified as unreliable wasn't the conception of Tina as a liar, or her lack of evidence to declare this 'sharp' impossibility of having another boyfriend. The conclusion of 'low degree of reliability' is reached by imagining how much Tina was feeling disappointed and pessimistic in that moment or her usual momentary feedbacks (though wasn't known well by respondents) which are presumably in contrast, with future actions etc.

The same contrast effect is when positive emotions or big enthusiasm take place. In excerpt below, though psycho-emotional state was defined only as relevant factor, sequence design cues, conversational implicature suggests that Blerta makes short-term declarations after receiving good news and is happy:

(8) *Context: L needed Blerta's notes to pass the exam*

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L: Ble:rta e kish marr 10 ↑npsiko:logji, kshtu që ↓tha se mi
↑jep shënimet
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Blerta got 10 in psychology, so she said she will lend me now her notes

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F: Shfrytzo:je rastin me ia ma:rr kto ↓dit
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Use the opportunity to take them these days, hahaha

F assumes that the happiness felt after taking the highest grade might have caused an impact on Blerta's statements, words chosen in that particular moment – in this instance to show more generosity than randomly. The restriction of time when L can count on her help, expressed through construction *these days,* tells that her promises don't match with actions after long periods, indicating that it isn't a completely sustainable promise.

Except mentioned variables, another resource which has influence on commenting the RS and its veracity, is shown to be the type of relationship with the original speaker (see Mushin 2001:1369), whether is about sister, cousin or just a friend, not necessarily the scale of recognition. They were shown more defensive and careful on displaying their familiars as more trustworthy than their friends or weakly known persons. Moreover, they showed that "information which is about people 'close' to the speaker (e.g. their children or spouses), their professional expertise or geographic locations with which they are familiar also fall into the domain of the speaker's territory" (Mushin 2001b:1364). This was proved while they commented issues which were familiar with their siblings' experience or competency, while inferred more doubt on the matters when the statement was of socially distanced author.

Furthermore, rationality about the possibility of the information to be true is also noticed to be a relevant factor:

(9) *Context: Ermira is a member of interlocutors' dancing group*

```
J: Ermira ↑tha që ne:sër i nisim ↓provat
```

Ermira said that tomorrow we'll start with rehearsals

```
M: Po ↓garant masi MEG i ka ↑kry
```

Yea since the MEG group finished

M uses her logical calculation about having her group's turn to make rehearsal, and that's important incentive to consider it as truth. This type of evaluating evidentiality is based on "…seeing a set of circumstances which must have resulted from a previous action" (Aikhenvald 2003:6).

Bearing in mind that "the source of the statement lies elsewhere than with the speaker who utters it" (Hanks 2014:6) and also has non-factual nature, the components which help the recipient to weigh the RS as a fact, as we demonstrated, are quite complex and difficult to be identified with total accuracy.
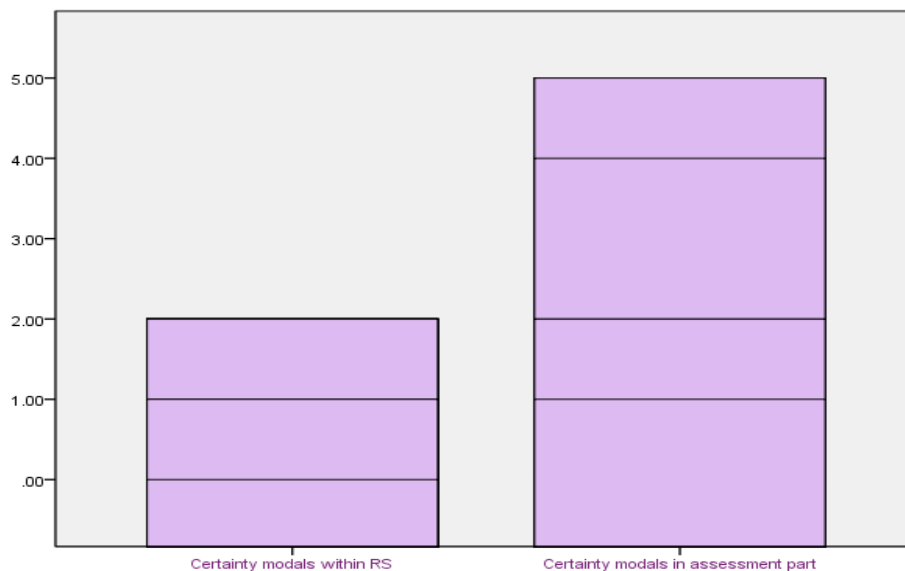
6. Usage of epistemic modals

The reliability of information, epistemic stance of speaker and attitude towards it, is often linguistically emphasized through epistemic devices, including modals, adverbs, which show speaker's commitment to the truth, confidence on validity (Cornilie, 2009, Palmer 2001, Holmes 1988, Mushin 2001a).

Though most respondents who reported a speech had direct contact with the original speaker and claimed that they heard themselves the statement/attitude, doesn't mean they frame clauses or approach RS only with certainty modals.

Thereby, by judging the reliability of evidence, the speaker inspects also epistemic modals accordingly, based on the source within the statement s/he talks about. Moreover, as briefly discussed, it's assumed that in their essence evidentials contain epistemic components (Crystal 2008, Boye 2012).

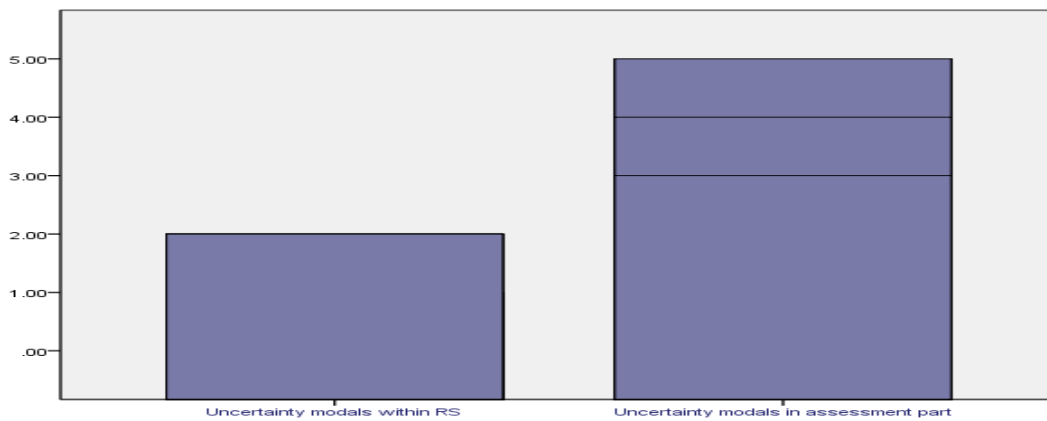We considered their presence within RS and on commenting/evaluating parts, then compared their overall distribution.

Figure 1. Distribution of certainty and uncertainty modals within and out of reported speech part

The figures show that modality markers were quite present in interactive circumstances: whether in RS or while commenting on others' statements, where they actively took their position towards veracity (mitigating or reinforcing it, partly depending on modals within RS).

After measuring the correlation between the presence of modals within and out RS was proved that there was a significant correlation between uncertain modals within the reported speech part and assessment/commenting part: $r(26)= -.473$, $p=0.01$. Results are not the same with certain ones, where was not proved a significant relation between these parts: $r(26)=.18$, $p=0.35$. This is consequence of the presence of high number of certainty modals in the assessment part when there were zero epistemic markers at RS part, as their absence in Albanian Language infers assurance, and this gave space to informants to consider the speech even more seriously than when the certainty modals were in high frequency. In a more cognitive line of research, Langacker (2013:14) states that: "the absence of a modal indicates that the occurrence profiled by a finite clause is accepted by the conceptualizer (C) as being "real", i.e. as something that C actually knows".

In the other case, while using uncertain modals, they "propose to be less accountable" (Pomerantz 1984:609), and in general, based on prosodic cues and creativity on assuming interpretations, the epistemic attitude of reporters was far more easily transmitted, due to lack of responsibility.

Viewed in the lens of factors which we elaborated, it is noticed a constructional inference overtly related with veracity and pragmatic effects of modals, where the more reliable the reported speaker, the more the assessment part is synchronized with modals' character used in RS.

7. Discussion

7.1. Reported evidential' validity

We argued that though in general, the information acquired through other's verbal report is considered as second-handed, it is not automatically viewed like that from interlocutors. If they take in serious consideration the original author, then *his/her words are deeds*. As Fitneva (2001:404) states "second-hand information can be considered more reliable than personally acquired information if the source is sacred or expert". For instance, after declaring *Era said that tomorrow schools won't work* the response is: *so let's get prepared for three days off (including weekend)* – meaning that they are ready to plan and do stuff only relying in reportive evidence.

On the other hand, they are more skeptical whenever they notice that the speech represents cues which benefit the reporter or the original author. Thereby, "when a description is seen to serve the

speaker's interest and/or an interest other than telling', 'reporting', 'sharing', etc., its validity may be treated with suspicion" (Pomerantz 1984:615). E.g. in a part of the conversations speaker expresses: *Ema said she knows all the stuff, but I didn't believe her cause she'll mix details protecting her sister,* showing that the assessment of veracity is "wholly dependent on what they know about the reported speaker" (Mushin 2001a:22)

However, we hypothesize that if the original author is the high-status person or their boss, the comments and evaluations won't be explicitly shown, and will remain hesitant, because asymmetric social power restrains some conversational practices (Fairclough 2014) and being completely straightforward may cause them problems that harm their interests, relationships etc. This should be examined in future research.

We also noticed that after sharing the reported speech, interlocutors don't take everything postulated. Though in transmitting another persons' words, "information is outside the speaker's territory of information and/or was acquired by hearing the information from someone else" (Mushin 2001b:1365), they are aware about possibility of certain unintentional distortions or misinterpretations and this is *constant feature* of reportives, regardless of assurance of the reporter.

8. Conclusion

In this article we demonstrated that reported speech is one of the devices which serves to obtain and encode evidence about an information. For its veracity, speaker casts responsibility to someone else, though the speaker is accounted as the retriever of it. S/he is responsible about its occurrence, if s/he expresses him/herself epistemically so, but if speaker asserts explicitly insurance or fragility about conveying original speech, s/he is partly accountable.

We argued that just because the utterance has a specified author, does not make it more trustworthy than a mere hearsay. It all depends on how the author is perceived (moral virtues, emotional state), the quality of evidence which is claimed to have, linguistic choices, how much is authoritative the source specified, as well as other interpersonal or interest information.

Of course, if information falls in reporter's or hearer's territory, i.e. one of them has epistemic right/authority about the issue which was uttered by the original author, the one who transmits or hears it, is more confident to approve or decline its truthfulness, regardless of other factors.

The implication of the quality of evidence, as well as relevant exponents which signal reliability and the fact if interlocutors (dis)agree with each other are also given implicitly through conversational turns' content and patterns, e.g. future expressions indicated reliability on RS (by making plans relying on true RS), while the past tense suggested doubt (remembering circumstances, authors' previous insincerity etc,) Thus, dialogues' linguistic shape also offered productive site on apprehending indirect convictions about persons who were employed on conversations.

Original author may be regarded as sincere in particular themes, but not in certain ones. This was noticed in constructions like: *she deceives herself when she talks about love; yea he predicts only calamities.* Of course, the reporter's relationship with the hearer, his/her (personal) interests, other virtues and the (in)direct access the speaker himself had on the matter, his/her potential interests also influence the degree of credibility and remain powerful indicators of the categorization of information's truth value.

The usage of evidentials and modals within the reported speech provided significant cues about the source and epistemic attitude towards RS. However, as Aikhenvald (2018:6) claims, "the true value of an utterance is not affected by an evidential", rather is deeply intertwined with

extralinguistic (socio-psychological and subjective) aspects, as it is "pragmatically determined, and as such, is not specified as part of the denotation of an evidential" (Aikhenvald 2018:6 citing Speas 2018). Thus, epistemic/evidential devices within RS conveyed (in)assurance doesn't mean that the reporter and hearer likewise perceived epistemological assessment. After they emphasized the evidential marker used in the past (if there was any), then pointed out how they qualify, not only the reliability expressed by the meaning of the modal, but also how other cues made them contest or approve the epistemic markers.

Moreover, even though the speaker who transmitted others' words attributes modals to the author, the veracity/validity of reporting exactly how they were uttered is approached differently when they are attributed to another person who isn't present. As pointed out, the current speaker may mistakenly or purposely fail to quote the exact modal used originally by the reported speaker. Conversely, "linguistic evidentials can, in fact, be manipulated in rather intricate ways in telling lies. Either the information source may be correct, and the information false; or the other way round". (Aikhenvald 2004:5). When the RS didn't contain any modals, it left more space for interlocutors to make assumptions. However, the evaluative part was filled more with certainty modals, regarding the implication that the absence of epistemic indexicals in the original report indicates certainty.

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