

Challenging evidential non-challengeability

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Abstract

Whether and how evidential markers can be challenged in discourse is theoretically consequential and yet it is not studied in depth: (i) only direct challenges are tested, not indirect; (ii) different evidential bases are not compared explicitly. This paper informs both gaps, providing a novel methodological framework for testing for challengeability based on the specifics of the evidential base. The results show that: (i) evidentials can be indirectly challenged, supporting a presuppositional account and falsifying alternative ones; (ii) different evidential bases are challenged in different ways, even within the same language; (iii) some evidential bases cannot be challenged, but this is due to the nature of the evidence they represent, not a consequence of the nature of the grammatical category of evidentiality, as assumed before.

1 Evidential (non-)challengeability

1.1 Direct challenges

The question whether evidentials are challengeable in discourse has been of interest since the first formal semantic work on evidentiality, (Izvorski, 1997), as it can inform whether they are interpreted as at-issue (AI) or not-at-issue (NAI) information.

Izvorski (1997) argues that evidentials in Bulgarian are not directly challengeable in conversation, as in (1): the proposition that Ivan passed the test can be felicitously contested by an interlocutor, but the evidential grounds for uttering it cannot be.¹

- (1) A: Ivan izkara-I izpit-a.
Ivan pass-REP exam-DEF
'Apparently, Ivan passed the exam.'

¹Evidential markers are formatted in **bold** in examples, and their approximate translation — in *italics*. The English translation is not intended to represent their (not-)at-issueness status. Glosses used: REP=reportative evidential; DIR=direct evidential; DEF=definite; REFL=reflexive; ADJ=adjective; SBJ=subjunctive; VOC=vocative.

B: This isn't true.

= 'It's not true that Ivan passed the exam.'

≠ 'It's not true that *it is said* that Ivan passed the exam.'

[Bulgarian], (Izvorski, 1997): (16)

In other languages (to the exception of Basque, see Korta and Zubeldia, 2014), this test has yielded the same results, which have been taken to support various types of NAI accounts: presuppositional (Izvorski, 1997; McCready and Asher, 2006; Matthewson et al., 2007): sincerity condition (Faller, 2002), NAI-assertion (Murray, 2010), evidentials as tenses (Smirnova, 2013) or as conventional implicatures (Koev, 2016); and also an AI account of evidentials as subjective content (Korotkova, 2016a,b).

1.2 Indirect challenges

The value of direct challengeability as a diagnostic for AI/NAI status has been disputed (Matthewson et al., 2007; Murray, 2010; Korotkova, 2016b), since the theories cited above do not make different predictions about it (they all predict patterns as in (1)); furthermore, even some AI content is not challengeable (Korotkova, 2016a, 2020a).²

However, when evidentials are attested to be not **directly** challengeable, an implicature is left behind that they may be indirectly so. This is also one of the theoretical predictions of presuppositional accounts, while it is not the case for others, such as NAI assertion and AI subjectivity. Therefore, while it may be true that direct challenge impossibility is not informative, indirect challenges are.

And yet whether and how evidential utterances can be indirectly challenged has not yet been explored. The primary empirical task of this paper, carried out in §2, is to fill that gap and address

²By the end of this paper, novel concerns are raised about the direct challengeability diagnostic as stated in (1).

whether (and which) evidentials can be challenged indirectly and how. The theoretical goal, explored in §3, is to compute some of the implications of the findings. The findings also provide a methodological blueprint for testing indirect denials and a new way to interpret direct ones.

1.3 Terminological conventions

The following terminology is adopted in this paper:

EVIDENTIAL ('ev')^{def} the evidential marker in the sentence, e.g. the morpheme *l* in (1).

EVIDENTIAL BASE ('ev base')^{def} the type of evidence that the evidential marker denotes, e.g. direct, reportative, or inferential evidence (Willett, 1988).

SCOPE SITUATION^{def} the situation which the evidence is about, e.g. the situation of Ivan passing the exam in (1).

Expanding on Smirnova (2013); Koev (2016), who propose that evidentials carry a temporal component (the evidence acquisition time), I propose that each ev base corresponds to an **event** of (respectively) witnessing, hearing a report about, or inferring about the scope situation. I refer to this event as the EVIDENTIAL EVENT ('ev event').

2 How to challenge evidentials

This section develops the methodology for indirectly challenging evidentials. The resulting empirical findings are: (i) overall, evidentials are indirectly challengeable; (ii) different ev bases have different challengeability profiles (even in the same language); (iii) thirdhand reportatives are not challengeable even indirectly, but this is due not to the nature of evidentiality as a grammatical category, rather to the nature of the ev event that that particular type of evidential represents (rumors).

The novel data provided here are from Bulgarian (other languages are identified individually), but the diagnostics are not language specific — they are ev base specific.

2.1 Challenging a direct evidential base

For an interlocutor to challenge the ev base means that they refuse to accept that the ev event occurred. The scope situation may be true, but the interlocutor submits that it is false that the speaker has that type of evidence about it. In what circumstances could such challenge occur? — When the ev event is impossible or at least highly improbable to have occurred. This is most intuitive to demonstrate with

direct evs, which denote an event of witnessing the scope situation (Willett, 1988).³

The example below is naturally occurring, uttered by a tween English-dominant heritage speaker of Bulgarian ('S'). His mom ('M'), a native speaker of Bulgarian, corrects him for his use of the direct evidential to describe something that happened when he was a baby, because it's impossible that he remembers his behavior (even though he was of course physically present when the scope situation occurred). As one of the (adult native) consultants commented when presented with this scenario, "one has to reach a certain age in order to be able to use that form".⁴

(2) S: Kogato **bjax** bebe, **placheh** mnogo.
when was.DIR baby cried.DIR a.lot
'When I was a baby, I used to cry a lot.'

M: Siakash pommish kolko problemi
as.if remember.2SG how-many problems
suzdavashe
created.2SG.DIR
'As if you could remember how much trouble you gave us!'

This example also shows that it is possible to agree on the scope situation and only disagree about the evidential event.

The next example is also natural, this time from the comments section of a news article about terrorist attacks.⁵ One commenter (A) disputes the news article's claim that the attacks were spontaneous and by few armed men; he uses direct evidential in his comment. Two other commenters (B, C) confront A on the basis that A couldn't have been an eyewitness of the events.

(3) A: Ataki-te **biaha** dosta dobre
attacks-DEF were.DIR very well
organizirani i v nikakav sluchai ne
organized and in no.ADJ way not
biaha ot samo 5-6 dushi.
were.DIR by just 5-6 people
'The attacks were very well organized and definitely not by just 5-6 people, as I saw.'

³Some languages have evidentials with a meaning much wider than just witnessing, such as the Best Possible Grounds (BPG) marker *mi* in Cuzco Quechua (Faller, 2002), which can be used even when one has reportative or inferential information, as long as it is the best possible kind of information one could have about the respective scope situation.

⁴This example also supports Korotkova's 2020b observation that evidentials have a *de se* component: one needs to be aware of one's own experience of the ev event in order to use an ev marker of the respective base.

⁵Source: [here](#).

B: [A] preuvelichava malko pri.uslovie.che
 A exaggerate.3SG a.bit given.that
 sigurno ne e prisustval tam
 probably not be.3SG been there
 ‘[A] is exaggerating a bit, given that he probably wasn’t there...’

C: Abe ti da ne si bil tam che
 VOC you SBJ not be.2SG been there that
 mnogo gi znaesh neshtata, vse.edno
 a.lot them know things.DEF as.if
 si bil s RPG-to
 be.2SG been with RPG-DEF
 ‘Were you(=A) there, that you know how it was, as if you were there with the RPG?’

The example confirms a note made by (Aikhenvald, 2004): “using a wrong evidential is one way of telling a lie” (p. 20).⁶ In this case, commenters B and C are calling out the lie on A.

But a direct marker doesn’t have to be a lie to be brought to the foreground in conversation. An interlocutor can pick up on the evidential base if it is surprising, such as in (4) (constructed), where B asks for confirmation of the evidential base with a rising declarative, or even take the marker itself as evidence that the speaker was present at the scope situation, as in (5) (natural):

(4) B (assuming that A wasn’t at the party):
 Chul li si neshto za partito?
 hear.PP Q REFL something about party.DEF
 Have you heard anything about the party?

A: Mina i Zlati se tseluva-ha.
 Mina and Zlati REFL kiss.3PL-PST.DIR
 ‘Mina and Zlati were kissing, I saw.’

B: Chakaj, chakaj, ti si BIL na partito?
 wait wait you are be.PP at party.DEF
 ‘Wait, wait, you WERE at the party?’

(5) A: Nejkov ne **beshe** tam.
 Nejkov not was.DIR there
 ‘Mr. Nejkov wasn’t there, I saw.’

B: Znachi ti si bil tam.
 so you be.3SG be.PP there
 ‘So you were there.’ source: [here](#)⁷

To sum up, this part demonstrated how the direct evidential base can be challenged — when it is impossible or implausible that the speaker was present at the scope situation (and aware about it, see fn. [4]) — and more broadly, how the base can be promoted to a question under discussion.

⁶An example of a sentence with a wrong ev marker is given in Aikhenvald (2004):98, (3.45), but not in conversation.

⁷This example is from 1922, but the judgement is equivalent today. See Kutsarov (1994) for an overview of the history of linguistic works describing evidentials in Bulgarian.

2.2 Different evidentials = different challengeability profiles

The received view is that various evidential bases have a uniform behavior with regards to conversational challenging: they all resist direct denials. But do they all behave uniformly with respect to indirect denials? This part demonstrates that different evidential bases — and even subtypes of bases, in the case of reportatives — have different challengeability profiles.

The previous section showed how to challenge the direct evidential marker; here the reportative is in the spotlight. Willett (1988) distinguishes between SECONDHAND and THIRDHAND reports encoded by evidential markers crosslinguistically:⁸ in secondhand reports, the source of the report is identified, while in thirdhand, it’s not known; rumors are such reports.⁹

According to Willett (1988), in some languages, there are different markers for the two types of report ev bases, in some, only one is represented, and in others, one marker is used for both readings. Bulgarian is of the latter type. This part shows that the Bulgarian reportative evidential behaves differently with regards to different types of reports: a third-hand reportative base cannot be challenged even indirectly (for reasons different from those predicted in the literature, discussed in §3) and the secondhand reportative base can be challenged under circumstances different from those relevant for the direct evidential.

2.2.1 Secondhand reports and reputation

In order to check whether and how secondhand reportative evidentials can be challenged, one needs to know whether and how what they represent — secondhand reports — can be challenged, highlighting that it is not the content of the claim that needs to be questioned, but the mere existence of a claim with such content.

Since reports are based on what people have said, they cannot be contested on the basis of some objective impossibility as with the direct ev base:

⁸Willett (1988) also considers folklore as part of reportatives, but fiction is beyond the scope of the present paper.

⁹A basic division between known and unknown sources is also used by Aikhenvald (2004), where the former (here: secondhand) is called quotative. There may be other uses of these labels (see AnderBois, 2019a: fn. [2]) and other languages with multiple reportatives manifesting other properties: for example, in Yucatec Maya, there is a reportative marker that allows both types of reports discussed here, and a quotative, which marks direct quotation (AnderBois, 2019a,b).

to do that, one has to be able to show that such a report could not have existed, but in order to show that, one has to know all the things the author ever said, which is in turn objectively impossible.

Implausibility, however, translates well in secondhand reports as the unlikelihood that that particular author would have said the respective report given their prior public commitments, i.e. their reputation.

To illustrate this, let's look at two famous people who publicize their opinion on climate change and stand by it with reliable consistency over time: Donald Trump, who denies global warming, and Greta Thunberg, the environmental activist. Their consistency allows their audience to build expectations of what they are likely to say and not say. In (6), B cannot felicitously reply with 'He can't have said that'. But if A said something implausible, as in (7), B could felicitously challenge the report.

(6) A: Trump tweeted that there is no global warming.

B: #He can't have said that!

(7) A: Trump tweeted that he will fight global warming.

B: He can't have said that!... (Are you sure you were looking at the *real* Trump's profile, or a fake profile? Was there a checkmark by the name?)

If we replace Trump with Greta Thunberg, the judgments are reversed, as in (8), (9), demonstrating that the challenge is indeed dependent on the source's reputation.

(8) A: Greta Thunberg tweeted that there is no global warming

B: She can't have said that!

(9) A: Greta Thunberg tweeted that she will fight global warming

B: #She can't have said that! (etc.)

For evidential markers that can represent secondhand reports, the findings above translate into a prediction that they can be challenged under the same conditions as the respective reports can. The next examples show that this is indeed borne out.

The first example, (10), illustrates this with an appositive that identifies the source.¹⁰ Comparing

¹⁰The reportative evidential here has the so-called CONCORD reading, where its interpretation is 'vacuous', as Schwager (2010) describes it (hence it is missing from the transla-

the infelicitous challenge in (10) with the felicitous one in (11), and the felicity parallel with the respective non-evidential reports in (6) and (7), reveals that challengeability is a function not of an intrinsic property of the category of evidentiality as a whole, but of the source's reputation, just as it is with non-evidential secondhand reports.

(10)A: Spored Trump nyama-**lo** globalno
according.to Trump has.no-REP global
zatoplyane.
warming
'According to Trump, there is no global warming.'

B: #Ne, ne može da e kazal tova!
no not may SBJ is said.PP this
'No, he could not have said this!'

(11)A: Spored Trump globalnoto zatoplyane
according.to Trump global warming
bito realen problem.
be.REP real problem
'According to Trump, global warming is a real problem.'

B: Ne, ne može da e kazal tova! [OK]
no not may SBJ is said.PP this
'No, he could not have said this!'

The next example uses the property of evidential anaphoricity, which strongly (if not exclusively, for Bulgarian at least) favors the secondhand interpretation, as first discussed by Murray (2010) for Cheyenne and confirmed for Bulgarian by Koev (2016). The generic form of anaphoric sequences is schematized in (12) after Murray (2010): (5.19): a reportative marker in the second independent sentence refers to the attitude holder introduced in the first one. Examples (13)-(14) show that such utterances are challengeable under the same conditions as the non-evidential reports in (6)-(7) and the evidential ones with an oblique source in (10)-(11).

(12) I spoke with Dale. Annie won REP.
REP=what D. said is that A. won

(13) A: Trump pak tweetva aktivno. Nyama-**lo**
Trump again tweets actively has.no-REP
globalno zatoplyane.
global warming
'Trump is actively tweeting again. [*he says*] There is no global warming.'

B: = B in (10), i.e. infelicitous

tion). The term is due to Schenner (2010a,b) on German and Turkish, see also Schwager (2010) on Tagalog and German, and Bary and Maier (2021) on Ancient Greek.

- (14) A: Trump pak tweetva aktivno. Globalnoto
 Trump again tweets actively global.DEF
 zatopyane **bilo** realen problem.
 warming is, REP real problem
 ‘Trump is actively tweeting again. [*he*
 says] Global warming is a real problem.’
 B: = B in (11), i.e. felicitous

To summarize, this part has demonstrated that secondhand reports can be challenged on the basis of reputation. The next part shows that the thirdhand ev base differs: it cannot be challenged.

2.2.2 Why thirdhand reports cannot be challenged

The successful challenge cases until now were based on impossibility or implausibility that the evidential event happened, or the reputation of the source. With rumors, one cannot appeal to reputation because the source is by definition unknown. One cannot appeal to impossibility or implausibility because any rumor could in principle exist: one can never rightly object with ‘Nobody (ever) said that!’ because for any claim there could have been someone who said it — it is objectively impossible to prove that there wasn’t, regardless of how the rumor was formally encoded: lexically, as in (15), or grammatically via evidentiality, (16).

- (15) A: Mina reportedly kissed Zlati.
 B: #Nobody ever said that!
 B’: #You didn’t hear that!

- (16) A: Mina tseluna-**la** Zlati.
 Mina kissed-REP Zlati
 ‘Mina *reportedly* kissed Zlati.’
 B: #Nikoi ne e kazal tova!
 nobody not is said.PP this
 ‘Nobody ever said that!’
 B’: #Ne si chula tova!
 not be.2SG heard.PP this
 ‘You didn’t hear that!’

Therefore, it is indeed impossible to challenge a thirdhand evidential, but this is simply because it is impossible to challenge the ev event it stands for: a rumor. It is not a function of the formal properties of evidentiality as a grammatical category, but simply the nature of rumors in particular.

3 Discussion of findings

This section explores some of the theoretical and methodological implications of the empirical findings reported in this paper.

3.1 Evidentials are indirectly challengeable

The major empirical finding presented in this paper is the first evidence that evidentials are indeed indirectly challengeable, i.e. nothing about the grammatical category prevents that. The theoretical consequences include novel support for: (i) the NAI status of evidentials; (ii) a presuppositional analysis of evidentials over alternative NAI accounts.

3.1.1 NAI

This paper opened with the observation that since [Izvorski \(1997\)](#), the literature has focused on whether evidentials are directly challengeable, and has taken the fact that they aren’t as evidence that they are NAI content.

But [Korotkova \(2016a, 2020a\)](#) point out that not being directly challengeable does not entail being NAI: a linguistic expression may be not directly challengeable also if it is simply not challengeable at all. For example, subjective content like pain reports is AI and yet not challengeable, because the speaker has privileged access to their own sensations:

- (17) A: I have a splitting headache.
 B: #No, you don’t.

[Korotkova \(2016a\)](#): (9)

The data presented in §2.1 and §2.2.1 show that the direct and the secondhand reportative ev bases do not represent subjective content, but events in the world (e.g. the evidential events of being a participant in the scope situation, or reading someone’s tweets) — and more than one person could have the same kind of evidential access to those events (observing the same scope situation or reading the same tweets). Thirdhand reportatives initially look like they confirm the prediction of the subjective hypothesis that evidentials are not challengeable in any way, but, as discussed in §2.2.2, the reason is not subjectivity, but the low bar for rumor quality: any rumors about anything could in principle exist. Therefore, evidentials as a category are not inherently subjective in the same way that first-person pain reports are.

Section §2 provides novel evidence that evidentials are NAI by showing: (i) that they are indirectly challengeable; (ii) how responses that target the evidential base — even when they accept it — affect the QUD ([Simons et al., 2010](#); [Beaver et al., 2017](#)): they change it. For example, in the heritage speaker

data, (2), the QUD is what the boy was like as a baby, but his mom changes the QUD to what he remembers. In the terrorist example, (3), the QUD is how many attackers there were and whether the attacks were organized or spontaneous; the responders change the QUD to whether the commenter who used the direct evidential was a witness or not. In the party example, (4), the question is about what happened at the party, but upon hearing the unexpected evidential, the responder changes the QUD to whether the commenter who used the direct evidential was at the party. If evidentials were AI meaning, they shouldn't change the QUD because they would be part of the QUD.

The aforementioned examples show that evidentials can be used to change the QUD. The next example demonstrates that they cannot be used as AI content by replicating the at-issueness test offered by Bary and Maier (2021):

- (18) A: What makes you think that Mary is ill?
 B: (i) #Allegedly, she has the flu.
 (ii) #Ze **schijnt** griep te hebben.
 she seems flu to have
 ‘She has the flu, *reportedly*’ [Dutch]
 (iii) John told me that she has the flu.

The idea is that if an evidential marker is not interpreted at issue, it cannot be a felicitous answer to an explicit question about how the speaker came to know about the scope situation. Like the Dutch reportative *schijnt*, in Bulgarian, too, neither the reportative, nor the direct evidential allow this:

- (19) A: Kak nauchi (vchera), che vali?
 how lean.DIR yesterday that rains
 ‘How did you find out that it was raining?’
 B: #Valja-**lo**. cf. B': ✓ **Kazaha**
 rain-REP
 mi.
 told.3PL.DIR me
 ‘It was raining, *reportedly*.’ | ‘I was told.’
 B'': #Vale-**she** cf. B''': ✓ **Vidiah**
 rain.DIR saw.1SG.DIR
 ‘It was raining, *I saw*.’ | ‘I saw.’

Thus, evidentials in Bulgarian can only be used to change the QUD and not to address an already established QUD. This explains why challenging them changes the QUD in the data in §2.

3.1.2 Presupposition

In addition to providing novel evidence that evidentials are NAI, the findings in this paper also inform

what type of NAI content they are, supporting a presuppositional account and partially the sincerity account (Faller, 2002), and ruling out alternative hypotheses, such as NAI assertion (Murray, 2010).¹¹

Izvorski's account can be generalized as:¹²

- (20) the speaker has evidence of type x for the scope situation
 where x is a variable for the type of evidence:
 direct, reportative, inferential, etc.

Such an account predicts that an ev base could be challenged indirectly, similarly to presuppositions (von Stechow, 2004). The data introduced in Section §2 demonstrate that this prediction is borne out, providing novel evidence for the presupposition hypothesis in addition to direct denials, reproduced from Izvorski (1997) in (1), avoiding the reservations about them as a diagnostic for (N)AIness discussed in §3.1.1.

Another parallel between presuppositions and the ways in which evidentials are challenged is (im)plausibility. Potts (2013) points out that a presupposition can be denied accommodation by an interlocutor on the basis of being implausible:

- (21) My {giraffe/sister} destroyed my homework.

The less plausible presupposition is much easier to be refused accommodation. The present paper showed that plausibility is an important factor in evidential challenges as well. This parallel also explains why evidentials seem to be generally easily accommodated and why specific conditions of implausibility need to be in place in order for a challenge to become a felicitous conversational move.

All presuppositional accounts of evidentiality to date are also modal accounts, most notably Izvorski (1997) and Matthewson et al. (2007). However, it need not be so, as illustrated by the following account of the direct evidential that is not modal but is presuppositional:

- (22) assertion: p
 presupposition: the speaker (consciously) participated in the scope situation s such that s

¹¹The conventional implicature hypothesis (Koev, 2016) is not discussed here, see Murray (2010): §3.7, §5.4.3 for arguments against it that are independent of challengeability.

¹²Izvorski's account focuses on the indirect base, this is a generalized formulation that extrapolates the idea to other evidential bases; it is adapted to the terminology used here.

exemplifies¹³ *p*

Therefore, the findings reported in this paper support the presuppositional hypothesis without informing or subscribing to the modal one.

Now let's look at why two other NAI accounts are less preferred than the presuppositional one.

Faller (2002) encodes evidentials in the sincerity conditions of an utterance. These include the condition that the speaker believes what they say (for assertion), and have evidence for it. In a sense, we can regard evidentials as simply specifying what kind of evidence. Similarly to the remark in Aikhenvald (2004) about evidential lies, this hypothesis correctly predicts that challenging an evidential can felicitously occur and it would amount to challenging the sincerity condition for that type of evidence, as for example in the terrorist attack example, (3).

However, Faller's account entails that insincerity is not just sufficient but also a necessary condition for a challenge to be felicitous. This incorrectly excludes examples like (2) (the heritage speaker, who is sincere) and (4) (the party), where the challenger is signalling her defeated expectations and asks for confirmation. Thus, while Faller's account captures some of the data, it undergenerates felicitous data, while the presuppositional account predicts all the data examined here.

Murray (2010) proposes that evidentials in Cheyenne constitute a new type of NAI content, NAI assertion: a non-negotiable update that directly restricts the common ground. This hypothesis seems to make similar predictions about challengeability as the subjectivity account: that the evidential content cannot be contested at all; therefore, it would not generate any of the novel data presented in this paper, except perhaps correctly ruling out the infelicitous AI uses of evidentials in (19). The NAI assertion hypothesis is therefore untenable for Bulgarian.

3.2 Different ev bases have different challengeability profiles

The second novel finding reported in this paper is that different ev bases do not have uniform behavior within the same language and therefore there is no one size fits all test informative of it; they are challenged under different conditions and in order to verify whether and how they can be challenged, scenarios need to be tailored to each respective

base's properties. This paper has introduced the methodology to do this for the direct and second-hand reportative bases (and the lack of such for the thirdhand reportative). From the results emerge some broader methodological implications: When testing for direct challengeability, some works provide examples for just one evidential base, assuming that the behavior of others is analogous. Let's reconsider the example this paper opened with, (1), repeated schematically here:

- (23) A: *p*-REP
B: That's not true. { $\neg p$ /*You didn't hear *p*}

Based on the findings in this paper, it is now clear that this test does not demonstrate what it aims to (that evidentials are NAI), because the infelicity does not arise from the nature of evidentiality as a whole, but as a property of rumors in particular.

But this test has previously been taken as informative, and has been replicated over and over, as illustrated below, and with the same results, which is now unsurprising given that the results are not driven by a grammatical property.

- (24) A: Ines-qa qaynunchay ñaña-n-ta-s
Ines-TOP yesterday sister-ACC-REP
watuku-sqa.
visit-PST2
'Inés visited her sister yesterday, I'm told.'
B: Mana-n chiqaq-chu. #Mana-n chay-ta
not-BPG true-NEG not-BPG this-ACC
willa-rqa-sunki-chu.
tell-PST1-3S2O-NEG
'That's not true. #You were not told this.'
[Cuzco Quechua], Faller (2002): (160-1)
- (25) A: Méave'ho'eno é-hestahe-sestse
Lame Deer 3-be.from-REP.3SG
Mókée'e.
Mókée'e
'Mókée'e is from Lame Deer, I hear.'
B: É-sáa-ne-hétóméto-hane-∅.
3-neg-AN-be.true-MODB-DIR
'That's not true...'
B': ✓É-sáa-hestahe-he-∅ M-o
3-neg-be.from-MODA-DIR
...She's not from L.D.'
B'': #Né-sáa-ne-néstó-he-∅
3-neg-AN-hear.B-MODA-DIR
...#You didn't hear that.'
B''': #Hovánee'e
nobody
é-sáa-ne-hé-he-∅
3-neg-AN-say.-MODB-DIR

¹³In the sense of Kratzer (2002, 2012).

...#Nobody said that.’

Murray (2010): 51, (3.5)

Such examples are often the only ones provided to demonstrate direct non-challengeability. For example, Murray (2010) describes four types of evidentials in Cheyenne, of which the reportative has both a secondhand and a thirdhand function, and yet only one example is provided, the thirdhand reportative (25). While Murray (2010) asserts that the results are the same for the other ev bases, the methodology for testing that is not provided — and this matters because, as the present paper has shown, each base comes with its idiosyncrasies, which have effects not only in indirect denials, but also in direct ones, as discussed here for the reportative.

To sum up, the findings in this paper have methodological implications not only for indirect challenge tests, but also for direct ones, showing that the specifics of each ev base need to be taken into account.

4 Conclusion

While there has been a lot of interest in the literature in whether evidential markers are directly challengeable, this paper provides the first empirical investigation into the question of whether they are indirectly challengeable and demonstrates how this diagnostic differentiates various theoretical hypotheses on evidentiality.

It emerged also that the direct ev base and the secondhand reportative one are challengeable much like presuppositions, while the thirdhand reportative base is not challengeable at all, but for reasons that have nothing to do with the nature of the category of evidentiality as a whole, contrary to what has been previously assumed.

The empirical evidence lays out a methodological blueprint for testing indirect challengeability that can be used for other languages and extended to other ev bases, and has implications for existing tests for direct challenges.

The findings strongly support a presuppositional account of evidentiality (not necessarily a modal one), mildly support a sincerity conditions-based account, and falsify subjective and NAI-assertion accounts with regards to Bulgarian.

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