Chapter 9. How to know things: evidentials in Amazonia

Every language has a way of saying how one knows what one is talking about, and what one
thinks about what one knows. The ways in which the information source can be expressed
vary. As Frans Boas (1938: 133) put it, 'while for us definiteness, number, and time are
obligatory aspects, we find in another language location near the speaker or somewhere else,
source of information — whether seen, heard, or inferred — as obligatory aspects'.

Evidentiality is a grammatical marking of how we know something — whether we
saw it happen, or heard it, or smelt it, or inferred what was happening based on logical
assumption, or on a result we can see, or just were told about it. In perhaps a quarter of the
world's languages, marking a selection of information sources is a 'must'. More than half of
these are spoken in Amazonia and the adjacent areas of the Andes. Grammatical evidentiality
— a rare bird in familiar Indo-European or Semitic languages — is a distinctive feature of
Amazonian languages. They boast the richest array of evidentials in the world.¹

A clause without a marker of information source would sounds strange to a native
speaker of Tariana (Arawak), Tucano (Tucanoan), Matses (Panoan), Kamaiurá (Tupí-
Guaraní), Hup (Makú), Quechua or Aymara. Someone who does not follow the conventions
of evidentials use runs the risk of being dubbed 'incompetent'. Those who speak languages
with evidentials may find it hard to relate to those whose languages lack evidential precision.
Speakers of languages with evidentials do try to introduce their lexical equivalents into the
Spanish and Portuguese they speak as contact languages. Native speakers of standard varieties
react to these attempts with disdain: for them, having to state how you know things makes
your speech suspiciously pedantic. Having to always say how you know things goes together
with being accurate. This principle goes together with cultural practices shared by people who
live next to each other, even if their languages are different.

¹
Let us now have a look at evidentials across the world, before we turn to what Amazonian languages can teach us.

### 9.1 Evidentials world-wide: a backdrop

Evidential systems vary. Some languages just mark information reported by someone else. Others distinguish firsthand and non-firsthand information sources. What one saw can be contrasted with what one learnt through hearing and smelling, and through various kinds of inference. Languages with grammatical evidentials divide into a number of types depending on how many information sources get a distinct grammatical marking. Semantic parameters employed in languages with grammatical evidentiality cover physical senses, several types of inference and of report. The recurrent terms in the systems are:

I. **VISUAL** covers evidence acquired through seeing.

II. **SENSORY** covers evidence through hearing, and is typically extended to smell and taste, and sometimes also touch.

III. **INFERENCE** based on visible or tangible evidence or result.

IV. **ASSUMPTION** based on evidence other than visible results: this may include logical reasoning, assumption or simply general knowledge.

VI. **REPORTED**, for reported information with no reference to who it was reported by.

VII. **QUOTATIVE**, for reported information with an overt reference to the quoted source.

Semantic parameters group together in various ways, depending on the system. The most straightforward grouping is found in three-term systems — where sensory parameters (I and II), inference (III and IV) and reported (V and VI) are grouped together in Quechua and in Bora which we will discuss further on.²
Numerous languages of Eurasia group parameters (II-VI) under a catch-all non-firsthand evidential, for example, Abkhaz and Yukaghir. This kind of system is uncommon in Amazonia.

Amazonian languages have even more terms. Mamaindê, a Nambiquara language, has a special evidential for 'general knowledge'. This language marks secondhand and thirdhand information differently. The maximum number of grammaticalized evidential terms in a system appears to be six. No spoken language has a special evidential to cover smell, taste, or feeling: this complex of meanings is typically covered by a non-visual, a non-firsthand, or experiential evidential. Evidentials may or may not have extensions of probability and speaker's evaluation of the trustworthiness of information.

In some languages, the reported evidential has an overtone of doubt: if I say in Estonian, 'he is-reported.evidential a doctor' it would mean that I doubt his qualifications or abilities. In English, 'they say' may imply that the speaker does not really believe what is being reported. In contrast, in Quechua, Shipibo-Konibo and Tariana, the reported evidential does not mean any of that. These languages have a plethora of other categories which express doubt, belief, disbelief and so on (some of these were touched upon in Chapter 6).

What evidential systems do we encounter in Amazonia, and what are their meanings? How are evidentials used in questions? How are they used in commands? And how do they interact with the person, and the tense, of the clause? Can more than one evidential occur in one sentence? How do evidentials correlate with societal values, and cultural conventions? What happens to them in language contact and in language obsolescence? These questions will be addressed here.
9.2 Evidentials in Amazonia and its surrounds

Amazonian languages offer a wide variety of evidentials — from two to six choices, and maybe more.

9.2.1 Two choices

One evidential term may refer to FIRSTHAND, and the other to NON-FIRSTHAND information sources. The 'firsthand' typically refers to information acquired through vision (or hearing, or other senses), and the non-firsthand covers all other sources, including inference and verbal report. In (1), from Jarawara, an Arawá language from Brazil, a 'firsthand' evidential marks what the speaker could see: the speaker had not seen Wero get down from his hammock and uses the non-firsthand marker for this. The speaker did see Wero leave, and so he uses the 'firsthand' evidential for that:

9.1 Wero kisa-me-no,

name get.down-BACK-IMMEDIATE.PAST.NONFIRSTHAND.masc
ka-me-hiri-ka
be.in.motion-BACK-RECENT.PAST.FIRSTHAND.masc-DECLARATIVE.masc
'Wero got down from his hammock (which I didn't see), and went out (which I did see)'

A typical conversation is as follows. One speaker asks the other:

9.2 jomee tiwa na-tafi-no awa?
dog 2sgO CAUS-wake-IMM.PAST.noneyewitness.masc seem.masc
'Did the dog wake you up?'
He uses non-firsthand evidential in his question: he didn't himself see or hear the dog; perhaps he was just told about. The other speaker — who had indeed been woken by the dog and thus saw it or heard it or both — answers using the firsthand evidential:

9.3  owa  na-tafi-*are*-ka

1sgO  CAUS-wake-IMM.PAST.eyewitness.masc-DECL.masc

'It did waken me' (I saw it or heard it)

Evidentials in Jarawara are distinguished in past tense only. This is normal in many languages with evidentials: the evidence is easier to gather for what has already occurred.⁵

Or there may be just one evidential marker for 'REPORTED' information. This kind of system is wide-spread throughout Arawak languages, and is also found in Arawá, some Tupí languages,⁶ the Tacana family, and Chacobo, the Panoan outlier in Bolivia. It is indeed the most frequent evidential in South America, and across the world.

Reported evidential in Cavineña, a Tacana language from Bolivia, is a clitic which attaches to the first word in the clause.⁷

9.4  aijama=pa=tuna-ja     ni=jae     ni=e=rami

not.exist.at.all=REP=3pl-DATIVE NOT.EVEN=fish   EVEN.NOT-NOUN.PREFIX-flesh

'They say that they really don't have any fish or meat'

The reported marker is used to repeat the information somebody has just said. This is almost like a quotation, but not really — the source is clear from the context:
9.5 Runeshi=pa=ekwana  [gringa=ra]  iya-mere-ya  avion=ekte
   Monday=REP=1pl  foreign.lady=ERG  put-CAUS-IMPERFV  plane=PERLATIVE

'The foreign lady (ergative) will have someone (pilot) taking us back by plane on Monday' (she said that)

Speakers of Nhêngatú, a Tupí-Guaraní lingua franca of north-west Amazonia, frequently use a reportive marker paá to distinguish 'what is hearsay from what is firsthand experience'.

Suppose one saw Aldevan go fishing. After that, Aldevan's aunt Marcilha arrives at the house and asks where he has gone. One then replies, u-sú u-piniatika (3sg-go 3sg-fish)

'He went fishing'. Then a friend comes to visit and asks Marcilha where Aldevan has gone. She replies, using a reported evidential — she did not see the man go:

9.6 u-sú u-piniatika  paá
   3sg-go 3sg-fish  REP

'He went fishing (they say/I was told)'

A further type of small evidential system involves having a marker for information acquired through a NON-FIRSTHAND source, and leaving any other information unmarked, or 'source-neutral'. This is frequent in Caucasian, Turkic and some Finno-Ugric languages. The 'non-firsthand' term has an array of meanings covering reported or hearsay, and logical deduction or inference.

The evidential marker -rke- in Mapudungun, an isolate spoken in the Andean areas of Chile and west central Argentina, is a prime example. In 9.7, it refers to reported information:
In 9.8, the same -rke- describes what one has inferred:

9.8 weðweð-pe-rke-la-y

crazy-PROXIMITY-RKE-INDIC-3person

'He must be crazy' (that one, he travelled through all that rain)

This same evidential form, -rke-, can have further meanings. If one sees someone one did not expect to see, one can exclaim:  

9.9 Miyaw-pa-rke-ymi

walk-CISLOCATIVE-RKE-2sgINDIC

'So you are (around) here! (What a surprise!)

Information source in Amazonia and the circum-Amazonian domain has to be precise. This may well correlate with the cultural requirement of being exact and careful, so as to avoid potential accusations of hiding something with bad intentions or worse – with being a sorcerer. Having a polysemous non-firsthand evidential whose exact interpretation hinges on the context is atypical for the Amazonian region.
9.2.2 Three choices

Evidential systems with three choices tend to include one which covers sensory perception — be it seeing, or seeing, hearing, smelling and feeling all in one. Amazonian and circum-
Amazonian languages have a number of options.

Quechua languages distinguish DIRECT (OR VISUAL), INFERRED AND REPORTED evidentials. A clitic -mi typically marks direct evidence, something I — the speaker — saw:

9.10  trabaja-aña-m   li-ku-n

work-PURPOSE.MOTION-now-DIRECT.EVIDENTIAL   go-REFLEXIVE-3person

'He's gone to work' (I saw him go)

The direct evidential also covers information obtained through other senses. One can use -mi to talk about something heard:

9.11  ancha-p   ancha-p-ña-m   buulla-kta   lula-n

too.much-GEN   too.much-GEN-NOW-DIR.EV   noise-ACC   make-3p

kada   tua-m

each   night-DIR.EV

'He really makes too much noise … every night' (I hear it)

Or about something one has tasted:

9.12  chay-chru   lurin   yaku-kuna-si   llalla-ku-n-mi

that-LOC   Lurin   water-PL-also   be.salty-REF-3-DIR.EV

'Even the water around Lurin is salty'
The clitic *-chi/-chr(a) expresses conjecture and inference. Suppose a woman's house was robbed, and she had seen someone next to her house. I didn't see the house, nor the woman — so the speaker assume that this witness is some other person, and say:

9.13  chay  lika-a-nii

that  see-NOMINALISER-1person

juk-ta-*chra-a  lika-la

other-ACCUSATIVE-CONJECTURAL.EVIDENTIAL-TOPIC see-PAST

'The witness ('my seer') must have seen someone else'

And the clitic *-shi describes information obtained through speech report — someone else told me that the teacher is too harsh on my daughter, and so I say to him:12

9.14  Ancha-p-*shi  wa'a-chi-nki

too.much-GENITIVE-REPORTED.EVIDENTIAL cry-CAUSATIVE-2person

wamla-a-ta

girl-1person-ACCUSATIVE

'You make my daughter cry too much' (they tell me)

Bora, from the Witotoan family,13 also distinguishes three evidential forms: visual, non-eyewitness and reported.

If a speaker of Matses, a Panoan language, has experienced something directly — that is, seen it, heard it or smelt it —, they would use an 'experiential' evidential. To answer a question 'How many wives do you have?, a Matses would say:14
According to Fleck (2007a), this can be understood as something like 'last time I checked, they were two'. Evidentials are there only in the past: again, this makes sense because information source is clearer for events which have happened.

If a speaker sees a dead man, and there is no natural cause for death in sight, they would use an inferential evidential:

9.16 nënëchokid-n ak-ak

shaman-ERG kill-REC.PAST.INFERRED

'A shaman (must have) killed him'

And if the speaker has not seen the corpse yet, and assumes that the shaman may have killed the man, the 'conjecture' evidential is the right choice:

9.17 nënëchokid-n ak-ash

shaman-ERG kill-REC.PAST.CONJECTURE

'A shaman (must have) killed him'

Neither the inferential nor the conjecture evidentials imply any uncertainty. If the speaker infers that the shaman must have killed the man, but they are not sure, they will use a counterfactual suffix -en:
There is one way in which Matses is unique in the world: there is no reported/hearsay evidential. This meaning can be expressed, but with a speech report, as in English 'they say that…' ¹⁵

Nanti, an Arawak language from the Campa group in Peru, is also unique, but in a different way. There are special forms for the Quotative, the Reported, and the Inferential.¹⁶ There is no marking for direct experience — also an unusual feature.

### 9.2.3 Four choices

Systems with four options are scattered across the Amazonian north. Each has at least one term for sensory perception — whether you saw something, or heard, tasted or smelt it.

Xamatauteri, a Yanomami language from Brazil, has four evidentials — **EYEWITNESS**, **DEDUCED/CONJECTURE**, **INFERRRED**, **REPORTED.**¹⁷ If I saw my friend eating, I would say:

9.19  a+ia+i+ku-pre-i

one+eat-DYNAMIC+be-TODAY.PAST-EYEWITNESS

'He was eating, this morning' (speaker saw him)

And if I saw any traces of him having already eaten — for instance, his food is gone or the dishes are dirty — I would say:
9.20  pē+a+ia-i+waiki-o+no+ku-pēre-xī

3+one+eat-DYNAMIC+already-MEDIAL+′be′-PAST.PRETODAY-DEDUCED

'It appeared that he had already eaten (when I arrived)'

If I come into the house and my friend is not there, I infer that he's gone off:

9.21  a+manaxi+hu-ma

one+INFERRED+go-PAST

'He is gone' (I think; inferred on the basis of his absence)

And if someone had told me that he is gone, I say:

9.22  a+horā+hu-ma

one+REPORTED+go-PAST

'It is said that he is gone'

Shipibo-Konibo, a Panoan language from Peru, has four evidentials: DIRECT EVIDENCE, INFERRED, ASSUMED, AND REPORTED. I will use the 'direct evidential' suffix -ra, if I see a fish being fried, or if I smell it, or if I hear the noise of it. If I can only infer what is happening, I will use the inferential -bira, and if I can only assume or speculate, I will use -mein. If I learnt something because somebody else told me, I will use -ronki, a reported evidential.18 The evidentials in these, and some other, languages are versatile enough to express more than one source of information: we look into this in §9.5.

A four-term system may distinguish what we saw (visual evidential), what we heard, or smelt or tasted (non-visual evidential), what we inferred (inferential), and what we learnt
from someone else (reported). This was described for Wanano, an East Tucanoan language from Brazil and Colombia.\textsuperscript{19} Most of the languages from this group offer a larger system of evidentials — the 'precious gems' mentioned in Box 1.1.

\section*{9.2.4 Five and more choices}

Languages with five or more evidentials have special ways of expressing different sources of sensory experience — usually visual and non-visual; inference and assumption; and speech reports. \textsc{visual}, \textsc{non-visual sensory}, \textsc{inferred}, \textsc{assumed}, and \textsc{reported} are distinguished in Tucanoan languages of Brazil and Colombia (including Tuyuca, Desano, Tucano),\textsuperscript{20} Tariana, from the Arawak family and the neighbouring but unrelated Hup and Yuhup (both Makú). This is how it works.

If I saw José play football, I will say, in Tariana:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{9.23} \textbf{J}use \textbf{i}rida \textbf{d}i-manika-\textbf{ka}
\item José football 3pl-play-\textsc{recent.past.\textit{visual}}
\item 'José played football (I saw it)'
\end{itemize}

If I just heard the noise of a football game but could not see it, I will say:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{9.24} \textbf{J}use \textbf{i}rida \textbf{d}i-manika-\textbf{mahka}
\item José football 3pl-play-\textsc{rec.p.\textit{nonvis}}
\item 'José played football (I heard it)'
\end{itemize}
If I see that the football is not in its normal place in the house, José and his football boots are gone (and his thongs are left behind), with crowds of people heading for the football ground, this is enough for me to infer that José is playing football. I then say:

9.25 Juse irida di-manika-nihka
José football 3pl-play-RECENT.PAST.INFERRED
'José played football (I infer it from visual evidence)'

If José is not at home on a Sunday afternoon, I will safely say 9.26. This is based on what I know about José's habits: he usually plays football on Sunday afternoon.

9.26 Juse irida di-manika-sika
José football 3pl-play-RECENT.PAST.ASSUMED
'José played football (we infer it from general knowledge)'

The difference between the two inferential-type evidentials ('assumed', and 'inferred') lies in access to visual evidence of something happening and to the degree of 'reasoning' involved. The less obvious the evidence and the more the speaker has to rely on reasoning based on general knowledge (or common sense), the more chance there is that the assumed will be used. An 'inferred' evidential is used to refer to something one has not seen, but which is based on obvious evidence which can be easily observed.

And if someone comes up to me and tells me that José played football, I will say 9.27:

9.27 Juse irida di-manika-pidaka
José football 3pl-play-REC.P.REPORTED
'José played football (we were told)'

A very similar system has also been described for Tuyuca, an East-Tucanoan language also spoken in the multilingual area of the Vaupes.21 Evidentials are realised as verb suffixes combining the following information: person, number, gender, tense, and evidential. The visual implies that the speaker saw the event or state, nonvisual sensory means that the speaker heard, tasted, smelt, or felt the event or state, inferred (based on results) is employed when the speaker saw the results of the event or state, assumed is used if the speaker assumes that the event or state occurred or if no information at all is available, and reported is chosen if the speaker heard about the event or state from someone else.

Here are some examples:

9.28 díiga apé-wi
he play-PAST.VISUAL:3sg

'He played soccer' (I saw him play)

9.29 díiga apé-wi?
he play-PAST.NONVISUAL:3sg

'He played soccer' (I heard the game and him; I did not see it)

9.30 díiga apé-yi
he play-PAST.INFERRED:3sg

'He played soccer' (I have seen the evidence: his shoeprint)
9.31 dígá apé-híyi
   he       play-PAST.ASSUMED:3sg
   'He played soccer' (I assume he did)

9.32 dígá apé-yígi
   he       play-PAST.REPORTED:3sg
   'He played soccer' (I was told by someone else)

And now look at how the same meanings are expressed in Hup, a Makú language, from the same area, but a totally different family:²²

9.33 mangá híd-án těw-náh=Ø káh
   Margarita 3pl-OBJECT yell.at-NEG=VISUAL ADVERSATIVE
   'Margarita didn't yell at them, actually' (the speaker saw this)

9.34 nasia pœ-sìw-ty=hɔ
   boat       go.upriver-COMPL-IMPF=NONVISUAL
   'The boat already went upriver' (heard but didn't see it)

9.35 tìh ?ɔg-yï?-níi-h
   3sg     drink-TELIC-ASSUMED-DECL
   'He drank it all up' (we see from empty pot)

9.36 ?am-an doʔay ?un'-ni-iy=sud
   2sg-OBJ Curupira suck-exist-IMPF=INFERRED
'The evil spirit (Curupira) has sucked you (your brain), apparently' (I assume based on what I know about life)

9.37  tih  ham-teg=mah

3sg  go-FUT=REPORTED

'He'll go (he or another said so)'

Why are these so similar in meanings and different in form? The clue lies in areal diffusion. When two or more languages are in contact with each other, they share ways of saying things and meanings which have to be expressed. If speakers know each other's languages and interact with each other every day, evidentials are what they come to share. This is what we talked about in Chapter 2, and will turn to again in §9.6.

Evidentials in Nambiquara languages, from Southern Amazonia, are even more elaborate. The Northern Nambiquara Mamaindê has six evidentials: marking what one saw (VISUAL); what one did not see but heard or smelt or tasted (NON-VISUAL), what one INFERRED; what belongs to 'GENERAL KNOWLEDGE'; what one knows as SECONDHAND REPORT and what one knows as THIRDHAND REPORT. No other language in the world has anything comparable.

The Southern Nambiquara dialect complex is more sophisticated. There is an obligatory marking on the verb for, among others:

• whether a statement is eyewitness — that is, implying that the speaker had seen the action they are reporting,

• whether a statement is inferred or assumed, whereby 'the speaker's claim…is based either on seeing an associated simultaneous action and making an interpretation therefrom, or on seeing
a set of circumstances which must have resulted from a previous action and making an inference; different suffixes mark these two options',

- whether it is reported, that is if 'the speaker is simply passing on information they have heard from another speaker', or
- whether there is 'internal support — if 'the speaker reports their 'gut feeling' that which they assert must be so'.

And there is a special system for expressing information source on a noun: see §5.2, and Table 5.2 there.

Evidentials may be more complex. Kamaiurá, a Tupí-Guarani language from the Xingu area (Seki 2000: 344-7) has six evidential particles: reported, je, 'attested by the speaker' (or firsthand) rak, direct visual evidence, ehe/he, or previously existent and now gone evidence heme. Indirect evidence (or inference) can be based on visible traces of an event, it is then marked with inip, or on the speaker's opinion or deduction, with the marker a'atj.

### 9.3 Adding up the evidence

When we learn about something we often have access to more than just one source. If I see José play football, I can normally also hear the game. And his boots are not in the house — so I can infer he is away, and could have used the inferred evidential. And it is Sunday, the day when he normally plays football — so what I see, what I hear and what I infer is confirmed by my assumption based on general knowledge. More often than not, someone would come and tell you, just in case you may not have seen, or heard or inferred or assumed, that José is playing football. With this wealth of sources coming together at once, how does one decide what to say when?

<Box 9.1 about here>
The principle behind using evidentials in many languages of the world, and especially in Amazonia, is 'sensory-first': one always gives preference to visual evidence if one has one. If not, one goes for the non-visual — following the principle in the Box 9.1. Other languages also put vision ahead of other sources, with everything else being equal. Robert Oswalt has described this principle for Kashaya, a Pomoan language, from California, and Lynn Gordon for Maricopa, a Yuman language, from Arizona.

What will happen if I don't follow the principle in Box 9.1? I may well be accused of lying, or of being incompetent — unless further subtler meanings of evidentials are drawn into play. A shaman is omniscient, and 'sees' things. He (for very few women have shamanic powers!) will use the visual evidential even if the information is not visible to an ordinary person. Our next section will deal with special rules, conventions and overtones of evidential use.

Do I always have to choose just one evidential if I have evidence coming from different quarters? In a handful languages — most of them from Amazonia — I can have several sources in one sentence. A speaker of Jarawara was talking about what had happened to him: the day had dawned on him some time ago in the location whose name he only knew by hearsay. He used the recent past (to reflect that is was some time ago) and a firsthand evidential (to reflect that he was there and had seen this happen). And he used the hearsay, 'reported' evidential with the name of the location — 'reportedly' known as the mouth Banawá river. This is how he phrased this, to R. M. W. Dixon:


Banawá mouth-CUST-REPORTED.f AT then lnsg.exc.S
ka-waha-ro otaa-ke
APPL-become.dawn-REM.PIRSTHAND.f Insg-DECL.f

'Then the day dawned on us (FIRSTHAND) (lit. we with-dawned) at the place
REPORTED to be (customarily) the mouth of the Banawá river'

If I attempt to translate this word for word, I will come up with a tortured and clumsy
sentence, like what one reads in English newspapers now and again — The alleged killer was
reportedly seen to be captured by the police. But unlike English, the Jarawara sentence is
natural and compact. We saw, in §5.2, how one can mark one tense on the verb, and another
one on the noun, within one clause in an Amazonian language. It is natural to say in Tariana,
**waha panisi- pena alia-ka** (we house-NOMINAL.FUTURE exist-RECENT.PAST-VISUAL) 'there
was our future house (which we saw in the recent past)'. But Jarawara appears to be unique in
the world in that two very different sources of information appear marked within one
sentence.

In other Amazonian languages, one evidential may specify the other. We can recall
that Bora has three evidentials: visual, non-eyewitness and reported. Two evidentials can
occur together, one specifying the evidence for the other. In 9.39, the reported evidential
indicates that the speaker was told about the event by somebody else. The non-firsthand
evidential implies that the one who told the speaker about the event had not seen it.

9.39 Hotsée-ɓá-ʔá-p’e umiɓá khutubá-ʔó-ha-tu
Joseph-REP-NONWITNESSED-PAST escaped dark-room-house-from

'Joseph escaped from jail a while back (the one who told me was not a witness)'
Expressing your information source in Matses involves further sophistication. A sentence can have two markers of information source, each with its own time frame. A hunter will say 9.40, if he saw fresh tracks of a white-lipped peccary a short time ago. The experiential evidential reflects the fact that he saw the tracks. What the inferred evidential reflects is that the tracks are the basis for inference that the peccary has been here:

9.40 ṣhēktenamē   kuen-ak-o-ṣh
white.lipped.peccary   pass.by-REC.PAST.INFERRED-REC.PAST.EXPERIENTIAL-3
'White-lipped peccaries evidently passed by (here)' (fresh tracks were discovered a short time ago)

If the hunter saw tracks of a white-lipped peccary a long time ago, and the tracks are fresh, he will use distant past experiential, and recent past inferred, since the inference relates to the fact that the peccaries have been here recently:

9.41 ṣhēktenamē   kuen-ak-onda-ṣh
white.lipped.peccary   pass.by-REC.PAST.INFERRED-DISTANT.PAST.EXPERIENTIAL-3
'White-lipped peccaries evidently passed by (here)' (fresh tracks were discovered a long time ago)

If the hunter saw old tracks of a white-lipped peccary a long time ago, and the tracks — basis for inference —, are old, he will say 9.42:

9.42 ṣhēktenamē   kuen-nēdak-o-ṣh
white.lipped.peccary   pass.by-REC.PAST.INFERRED-REC.PAST.EXPERIENTIAL-3
'White-lipped peccaries evidently passed by (here)' (old tracks were discovered a short time ago)

Matses is uniquely versatile in allowing one to pack so much information into a single verb. Having evidentials in your language is a powerful tool. But beware: the meanings of evidentials may go beyond just information source. They change depending on whether the speaker is you, me, or a third party. Evidentials in questions are not the same as they are in statements.

9.4 Beyond simple evidence: evidentials and their meanings

An evidential may have an additional meaning, going beyond simple information source. The VISUAL evidential usually covers information acquired through seeing, and also generally known and observable facts. Every Peruvian knows that there are monkeys in the rainforest. This generally known fact is expressed using a visual evidential. 9.43 comes from Cuzco Quechua:

9.43  Yunka-pi-n  k'usillu-kuna-qa  ka-n
       rainforest-LOC-DIR.EV  monkey-PL-TOP  be-3p

'In the rainforest, there are monkeys'

One is likely to be certain about what one has seen with one's own eyes. The visual evidential tends to have overtones of commitment to the truth of utterance, control over the information and certainty. To have seen something often means the same as to know it. In Wanka Quechua, the 'direct' evidential covers speaker's own feelings and internal states: something one cannot really 'see':
One cannot experience what another person feels. So, in Wanka Quechua it would be appropriate to talk about someone else's state or feeling using conjecture evidential:

9.45  pishipaa-shra-chr  ka-ya-nki
   be.tired-ATTRIB-INFR  be-IMPV-2p
   '(Sit here); you must be tired' (INFERRED)

You are expected to use different evidentials when talking about SELF and about OTHER: the information sources are not the same. But if you are absolutely sure of how the other person feels, the direct marker -mi would be appropriate:

9.46  llaki-ku-n-mi
   sad-REFL-3p-DIR.EV
   'He is sad' (DIRECT)

That is, the direct evidential has overtones of certainty and belief that what 'I' say is true. Languages with larger evidential systems offer more fine-grained choices. East Tucanoan languages and Tariana have two sensory evidentials — one for visual, and one for non-visual information. You cannot 'see' how you feel — so it is appropriate to use non-visual evidential when talking about yourself this way, in Tucano:29
When a young Mamaindê man was told a funny joke, he commented:

9.47 yi'i-re upi-ka püri-sa'
I-TOP.NON.A/S tooth-CL:ROUND hurt-PRES.NONVIS.nonthird.p

'My tooth hurts'

When you talk about how someone else feels, you judge by what you see yourself: you cannot get into their skin and feel what they feel. So, a visual evidential is appropriate. If I see that Pedro looks very sick I will say, in Tucano:

9.48 tai-āni nahohnto?
I-FINAL.NOMINAL.SUFF much
kāun-ta-le-Ö-hĩn-wa
laugh-1ST-1PAST-3.SBJ-PAST.NON.VISUAL-DECL

'To me, it was (nonvisual) really laughable'

A non-visual evidential may refer to something I cannot quite see, and am not quite sure about. Once I saw a man coming; neither I nor Olívia, my teacher of Tariana, was sure exactly who it was. She thought it was Batista, and said:
9.50 Batista di-nu-mha

Batista 3sgn-f-come-PRESENT.NONVISUAL

'Batista must be coming' (nonvisual: I can't quite see that it is him)

The man turned around, and we saw that it was Batista. Then, it was appropriate to say:

9.51 Batista di-nu-naka

Batista 3sgn-f-come-PRESENT.VISUAL

'Batista is coming' (visual: I see that it is him)

A Mamaindê man had just taken a second wife, but is not quite certain if he had done the right thing, uses the non-visual evidential talking about this whole matter.30

Visual evidential has an overtone of assurance — I am sure of what I see. But if I am talking about myself, I can use non-visual evidential if whatever happened was out of my control. Suppose I broke a plate by chance — it slipped out of my hands. I will then say, in Tucano31 and in Tariana:

Tucano

9.52 bapá bope-ási

plate break-REC.P.NONVIS.nonthird.p

'I broke a plate by chance'

Tariana

9.53 karapi nu-thuka-mahka

plate 1sg-break-REC.P.NONVIS
'I broke a plate by chance'

This is what the literature on evidentials calls 'first person effect': when I talk about myself, evidentials have someone different overtones. If I was drunk or unconscious, and do not really remember what I did, I can even use a reported evidential to talk about myself: 'I spent the night drinking-reported' takes away all the responsibility from my being drunk all night.

Suppose I see something which I did not expect. I can then use a non-firsthand or a non-visual evidential. A speaker of Jarawara saw a dead sloth — he was surprised that the sloth was dead, and used the non-firsthand evidential despite the fact that he actually saw it:

9.54   jo  abohi    home-hino
sloth(masc)  be.dead+COMPL.CL  lie-IMMEDIATE.PAST.NONFIRSTHAND.masc
'A dead sloth lay (there)' (nonfirsthand: as a marker of surprise)

This meaning is known as 'mirative'. Many languages employ non-visual evidentials this way, with this meaning. Others do not. In Mýky, an isolate from Brazil, visual and non-visual evidential distinctions are obligatory for second and third person, and not made at all in the first person.32

In many languages of the world, a reported evidential implies that I don't quite believe what I have been told. In English, 'they say he is a doctor' may cast doubt on his qualifications. Not so in most Amazonian languages. As Valenzuela (2003: 57) remarks for Shipibo-Konibo, the selection of reported evidential over the direct evidential 'does not indicate uncertainty or a lesser degree of reliability but simply reported information'.
Languages with multi-term evidentials generally tend to have a multiplicity of other verbal categories, especially those that relate to modalities. The larger the evidential system, the less likely it is that the evidential terms will develop epistemic extensions.

In a question, an evidential can be ambiguous. It can reflect the information source which the speaker — that it, the 'questioner' — has. A question in 9.55 from Bora implies that I, the questioner, was told that you are going. All you have to do is confirm it or not.

9.55 à- bà ú phê-é-ñí
INTER-REP you go-FUT-VERB.TERMINATING.CLASSIFIER
'Are you going (as I was told),'

Evidentials in Matses questions work on a different basis: the information source they reflect is that of the speaker. The person who asked 9.64 used the 'conjecture' evidential — thus foreshadowing the fact that the speaker did not see Tumi leave:

9.56 ada tumi nid-pa-ash
UNCERT man.s.name go-COMMENT-REC.PAST.CONJECTURE
'Do you think that Tumi might have left?'

It turns out that the 'answerer' has in fact seen Tumi leave, contrary to the 'questioner's' assumption. He replies, using the experiential evidential (which typically refers to information obtained directly through a sensory source), confirming his information source by reiterating it in plain Matses, and then adding: 'I did see it':

9.57 ai nid-o-şh nid-kio-o-şh
yes go-REC.PAST.EXPER-3 go-EMPH-REC.PAST.EXPER-3
In a language like Matses, one has to be careful when using an evidential in questions, lest you get your interlocutor's information source wrong. The same applies to Tariana and to Tucano. If you ask someone about something using a visual evidential, this may be fraught with danger: your question may be understood as an accusation — see Table 9.1. The reported evidential is not used in questions at all. This is why the Tariana and the Tucano people are reluctant to ask too many questions — it is safer to wait for information for be volunteered.

What about evidentials in commands? In some languages, like Jarawara, Matses, Mõky, an isolate from Brazil, evidentials are not used in imperatives. The only evidential used in commands in other languages is the reported one. Its meaning, however, goes beyond 'hearsay' or 'reported information': it is a command to do something on someone else's order, and is often referred to as 'imperative by proxy'. Once I was working with Jovino Brito, a speaker of Tariana. His mother Maria called me (9.58) to come and eat.

9.58 pi-hña-si

2sg-eat-CLOSE:TO.SPEAKER

'Come eat!'

I did not immediately obey the command. Then, Jovino repeated her command to me as 'eat-you-were-told-to':

nid-šho is-o-mbi

go-while.S/A/O.to.O see-REC.PAST.EXPER-I.A

'Yes, he left/ He really left. I saw him leave' (lit. I saw him as he went)
9.59 pi-ñha-pida

2sg-eat-SECONDHAND.IMPV

'Eat (on someone else's order)! (that is, eat-you were told to)

In Tariana and the neighbouring Tucanoan languages, there is one fused marker for a secondhand command. In other languages, such as Cavineña and Shipibo-Konibo, a reported evidential is used with an imperative marker. The reported evidential in Cavineña commands makes a harsh order sound softer:

9.60 Jeti-kwe=pa!  Ba-diru-kwe=pa!

come-IMPER.SG=REP  see-GO.PERMANENTLY-IMPER.SG=REP

'(Daddy,) come over (he says)! Go see him (he says)!'

In many languages — including Jarawara and Matses — evidentials are restricted to just past tenses. Hardly any language has evidentials in the future — this is understandable, since it is hard to know where our future knowledge is to come from. In most languages of the Vaupés area, however, a reported evidential can be squeezed into a statement about what's to come: 'She is to come-reported evidential' means 'I was told that she is to come'. In some, like in Mëky, no evidentials at all can be distinguished if the clause is negative. Having evidentials in a subordinate clause is rare (we find this in Matses, but hardly anywhere else). The interplay of these properties makes evidentials into a fascinating object of study for a linguist. Using and choosing evidentials is another matter, which can make or break a speaker (and a linguist).
9.5 Choosing and using an evidential

If a language has obligatory evidentials, leaving them out produces a grammatically awkward 'incomplete' sentence. A sentence without evidentiality markers in Kamaiurá, comes out as unnatural, 'something artificial, sterile, deprived of colour' (Seki 2000: 347; my translation). The implications of using a wrong evidential, or not using one at all, may be even worse. White people — many of them missionaries — who did not use evidentials are seen as 'liars' — see Box 9.2. Speakers are often conscious of how evidentials are to be used. The meanings of evidentials extend to cover newly acquired cultural practices.

9.5.1 On getting it 'right'

We saw, in Box 9.1, that, everything else being equal, preference is given to something we see, or hear. Evidentiality choices are constrained by some rules — we saw in §9.3 that if I am talking about my own feelings or actions my choice of evidential would not be the same as when I talk about some else's. And some evidential choices always describe certain types of experience. We call them CULTURAL CONVENTIONS. Consider dreams. In Jarawara and Wanka Quechua, dreams are 'seen'; they are part of 'everyday experienced reality'. But if a speaker of Tariana or Tucano has a dream, this is not something one really sees — a non-visual evidential is then in order. However, a shaman — who is omniscient and 'sees' all — has prophetic dreams. These dreams are 'seen', and they are expressed with a visual evidential. Dreams dreamt by ordinary humans are not part of reality in Shipibo-Konibo — and so they are recounted using the reported evidential =ronki. But if a shaman has a dream or a vision induced by the hallucinogenous ayahuasca he will retell this experience using direct
evidential. What this shows is how evidentials are linked to person's status, access of knowledge and power, in societies which we are accustomed to seeing as egalitarian at heart.

In their traditional life, speakers of Kagwahiv (a Tupí-Guaraní language, from the Upper Madeira River basin) used to rely on dreams a lot. Dreams were used to forecast the presence of game, to plan the day's hunt, and to foresee illness and death. In times of wars, dreams were relied upon to predict the winner. Relating a dream and discussing what it may possibly mean used to be an important part of Kagwahiv interactions. And every sentence in a dream contains an evidential, *ra'ú* — a marker of nonfirsthand information. This may appear odd: as Kracke (2010: 69) puts it, 'in our way of thinking about dreams, it would seem that dreams are par excellence events witnessed by the person telling them'. The Kagwahiv 'dream-marker' *ra'ú* is cognate to words meaning 'ghost', 'augury', and relating to 'falsehood' in general. Dreams can provide information about the future; but they are regarded as essentially deceptive and unreliable: a dream 'is a message, a message from an unknown source. Hence it cannot be coded as personal experience'. Or, in Western psychoanalyst Lacan's words (1988: 135), 'someone other than ourselves talks in our dreams'. What we have to learn from a psychoanalyst, speakers of languages with evidentials know through evidentiality conventions.

What happens if speakers of a language acquire access to new means of knowing things? As Boas put it, 'when changes of culture demand new ways of expression, languages are sufficiently pliable to follow the needs'. New practices — reading, television, radio, telephone and internet — help us understand just how pliable the systems are. A Shipibo-Konibo speaker will now employ reported *=ronki* to talk about what they read in a book. And a speaker of Tariana or Tucano will use an assumed evidential, typically used for information acquired by interpretation, reasoning or common sense. Its equivalent in their Portuguese is *appear* (*parece*) — we turn to this in the next section.
If a Shipibo-Konibo watches something on television, this implies 'experiencing the event oneself, since one actually "sees" what is happening' — and so they would use the direct evidential =ra. Tariana and Tucano speakers would use a visual evidential. But if a Shipibo-Konibo hears something on the radio, or hears a TV report without seeing the picture, they will use the reported =ronki. A Tariana or a Tucano would use a non-visual evidential.

Before Tariana speakers acquired regular access to the phone, they used a non-visual evidential for the occasional reports of phone conversations. Ten years on, a phone is part of their lives, and a conversation on the phone is being treated as the same as a face-to-face talk. A visual evidential is now preferred in this context. And for the few speakers who now are in the habit of regularly chatting over the internet, this is also like face-to-face: a visual evidential is preferred.

Types of stories always go together with just one evidential. We call these tokens of a genre. In the overwhelming majority of languages, ancestral stories and legends are usually told using reported evidential. Traditional tales in Jarawara are told using non-firsthand evidential, which in 90% of the cases is followed by the reported suffix. A story about what happened to the speaker can be firsthand, as in Jarawara, experiential, as in Matses, or visual, as in Tariana, Tucano and other languages with many evidential options.

Knowing which evidential to use, and when, provides an important way of imposing one's authority. A warrior-ancestor of the Carib-speaking Kalapalo is a strong character, who wishes to make a point in his speech. This attitude is reflected in the evidentials he uses. In Ellen Basso's words (1990: 137-40), the most assertive and imposing part is marked with distant past firsthand evidential, and 'the tone is something like, "I bear witness"'.

But if you are neither a respectable authority nor a shaman, and the community feels you have no reason to over-use an evidential, you may be in trouble. David Weber (1986: 142) describes a speaker who was using the direct evidential -mi too much. To many, this
sounded 'incautious with respect to the information' conveyed; the man was judged to be 'not a member of a Quechua speaking community which values his stature'. Incorrect use of evidentials may result in something worse. This is how Weber describes it: 'TCV [Weber's consultant] knows a man (referred to by his neighbours as "loko" ['crazy'] who constantly uses -mi. TCV reports that no one believes what he says because he "always speaks as though he had witnessed what he is telling about"'. To this, Weber adds: 'At best he is an argumentative braggart and from TCV's description I would guess that he is mentally ill.' Breaching evidential conventions appears to be a good enough reason for an amateur psychiatric diagnosis. Breaching conventions of evidential use results in possible SOCIAL EXCLUSION.

What if your audience does not 'buy' your argument, and you notice puzzled looks and frowns? Then, you may want to stress your source with a lexical paraphrase. The late Américo Brito was the oldest speaker of Tariana, and the only one alive to have seen the Offering ritual with his own eyes. He was describing it using visual evidential, and then added 'I saw it', to avoid any possible doubt from anyone of the audience:

9.61 nha pa-ehkwapi na-walita-ka-na nu-ka-na nhua

they one-CL.DAY 3pl-offer-DECL-REM.PAST.VISUAL 1sg-see-REM.PAST.VISUAL I

'They were offering for one day, I saw (it)'

Language learners who get their evidentials wrong are immediately corrected. R. M. W. Dixon describes how he went to the forest with a Jarawara friend, and saw a newly fallen tree. He commented 'the tree has recently fallen-firsthand evidential'. The friend corrected him instantly, using the nonfirsthand evidential: neither of them had actually seen the tree fall. And children learn how to use evidentials remarkably early: a Kagwahiv child of five was able to recount his dream to Waud Kracke, using the correct evidential.
A Matses speaker who had asked 9.56, "Do you think that Tumi might have left?" assumed that the answerer had not seen Tumi leave. In actual fact the answerer had seen Tumi leave — and this is what he reflected in his elaborate answer in 9.57. David Fleck (2007a: 597) explains this as follows: 'a miscalculation in a question such as that in 9.56 would not be considered a lie or a poor speech, whereas inaccurate use of an evidential in a declarative statement would be judged either as a deliberate attempt to deceive or a mistake. Though less flagrant', the first clause in 9.56, 'would be as much a lie as' the second clause in 9.57, 'if the answerer did not see the person leave'. Using a wrong evidential is tantamount to a flagrant lie. This takes us to the next question: are speakers of languages with evidentials always honest?

9.5.2 How to tell a lie using an evidential

Can you lie with an evidential? You can — all you have to be is smart. The late Graciliano Sanchez Brito, a major authority on Tariana, assured me once that the Tariana people never lie — if they ever did, their mouth would 'rot'. But characters of the stories he and his family told me are fairly inventive in how they lie, manipulating their evidentials to suit their purpose. Some give a correct information source and wrong information. The cunning turtle got his leg caught by a nasty jaguar, and said to him, in Tariana:

\[
\begin{align*}
9.62 & \text{awiña} & \text{i-pari-nuku} & \text{phipa-naka} \\
& \text{wacu.tree} & \text{INDEF-root-TOP.NON.A/S} & 2sg+\text{grab-PRES.VIS}
\end{align*}
\]

'You are grabbing the root of a tree (I see it)' (in fact he is grabbing the foot)

The evidential is present visual — which is just right. But the information is wrong: the jaguar has grabbed the turtle's leg, and not the tree root. The stupid jaguar believes the smart liar, and lets him go.
Others give the right information and the wrong information source. A woman had seen her husband go off hunting. Yet, when his mates come and enquire about him, she says to them using the reported evidential:

9.63 awakada-se  di-a-kha-pidana
jungle-LOC  3sgnf-go-AWAY-REM.PAST.REPORTED

'He went to the jungle, reported' (in fact she saw him leave)

She does so because she is fed up with the man and wants to have nothing to do with him. She achieves her aim: the mates do not ask her any more about his whereabouts. They do later on discover that she'd lied, and accuse her of sorcery which must have led to her husband's death. This is a cautionary tale: lie if you must, but bear the consequences.

Getting your evidential right is 'a matter of accuracy', not morality.\(^45\) This takes us to the pervasive principle: 'be as precise as your neighbour' and 'talk as your neighbour does'.

9.6 Talk as your neighbour does

To get your evidentials right, you need to be accurate. If you are not, you may be accused of sorcery, or just deemed unreliable. Those who have evidentials in their languages complain that languages without evidentials — Portuguese and Spanish included — are somehow deficient and inadequate.\(^46\) Hence the perception of 'white people' — those outsiders who do not have information markers in their speech — as 'liars': see Box 9.2.

The obligatory marking of one's information source is perceived as universal by the Jaqi speakers for one other reason. Evidentiality is now part of the local Andean variety of Spanish. This is one of the few traits the dominant Spanish got from Aymara, a minority language. And outsiders who speak different other varieties of Spanish — including those
fresh from Spain — or learners of Aymara who disregard the evidential system, are at a
disadvantage. At best, they are perceived as unreliable and, at worst, as outright liars.\(^{47}\)

Disregard for obligatory marking of information source in preparing information booklets on
agriculture in Aymara led to their rejection by the people. A primer prepared by a German
linguistic team in 1980 suffered the same fate for the same reason (Hardman 1986: 135).

In the Spanish of La Paz, existing forms of verbs have been reinterpreted to fit in with
the evidential requirement 'inherited' from the Aymara. If a speaker of La Paz Spanish had
seen the lady arrive, he would say:

9.64 Hoy día llegó su mama de él
        today arrived:PRETERITE his mother of he

'Today his mother arrived' (and I saw her arrive)

The form he would use is the 'preterite — a normal past tense form in standard
Spanish. But it has now extended to express a meaning related to information source. And if
he hadn't seen her, he would use 'pluperfect' — normally used for 'past in the past':\(^{38}\)

9.65 Hoy día había llegado su mama de él
        today day had.arrived:PLUPERFECT his mother of he

'Today his mother arrived' (but I didn't see her arrive)

That these new evidential meanings infiltrate the already existing forms shows how
pervasive evidentials are, in the Amazonian and the circum-Amazonian environment.

Languages of three different families are spoken within the multilingual area of the
Vaupés River Basin — East-Tucanoan, Arawak and Makú. The evidential forms are different,
but the meanings are almost identical. The pressure to 'talk like your neighbour does' only works if you are in day-to-day contact. The Baniwa, an Arawak group, and Dâw, a Makú group, who live on the outskirts of the Vaupés area, have just one, reported evidential. Their contact with the Vaupés people is not strong enough to create the need for fully matching evidentials.

The lure of evidentials is such that the meanings they express make their way into the contact languages. Take the Portuguese spoken by Indians in the Vaupés region. For them, this is a contact language which is not 'their own'. Jovino Brito speaks several languages of the area: his father's Tariana, his wife's Piratapuya and the dominant Tucano. All of these have evidentials. When Jovino speaks Portuguese, he makes sure all evidential distinctions are observed. If he saw something, he adds 'I saw', and if he heard something, he adds 'I hear'. If something is inferred based on visual evidence, for instance, if it has rained and we can see the puddles, he says 'I have proof'. For something assumed, he adds 'it appears', and for something reported, 'it is said', dizque. Now imagine him reading an announcement about a forthcoming football match and then repeating it as 'There will be a match, it appears'. This statement is met with bizarre looks from speakers of more standard varieties of Portuguese. For them, Indians are strange, and they can't talk right.

Many other speakers are not so elaborate — all non-firsthand information is accompanied by dizque, 'it is said that'. Dizque is pervasive in most South American varieties: Travis (2006) described it for Colombian Spanish, Olbertz (2008) and Babel (2009) for Spanish in Ecuador, and Andrade Ciudad (2007) for Spanish in Peru and the Andean area in general. Its meanings cover reported speech, quotation, inference and assumption.

Dizque can even be used to express surprise. Franci was a Tariana girl who grew up speaking Indian Portuguese in Manaus. Her mother sent her back to live with her Tariana relatives in the mission centre. Franci did not think of herself as a good cook. Nevertheless, she
undertook some domestic duties. Once I came into the kitchen and saw Franci at the stove. I asked, 'What are you doing, Franci'. The girl replied, in Portuguese, 'I am making pancakes *dizque* with a mixture of surprise and embarrassment on her face. The Kagwahiv speakers like telling their dreams. Nowadays, they often do so in Portuguese — and then, instead of non-firsthand 'dream-marker' *ra'e*, employ the ubiquitous *dizque*.\(^{49}\)

**9.7 Evidentials on the way out**

Sadly, many Amazonian languages are falling into disuse. Portuguese, Spanish, and also French replace them with an almost meteoric speed. A five-year-old boy adept at speaking Kagwahiv was much more comfortable telling his dream to Waud Kracke in Portuguese. And when he switched to Portuguese, he stopped using the Kagwahib evidential, which is obligatory when you tell your dream in that language.

The last speakers of languages with evidentials often do not use them at all. In 1991, Bare, once an important language of the Amazonian north-west, was down to one last speaker, the late Candelário da Silva. The language was partly documented before that, by Lopez Sanz's who wrote a brief grammar (1972) based his work in 1960s.

The variety of Bare recorded by Lopez Sanz has a richer morphology than the language of Candelário. Verb forms attested in Lopez Sanz (1972) contain up to five suffixes, whereas Candelário never used more than one suffix on the verb. It has many aspectual and modal markers, such as *phéi* 'durative' and *-ya* 'dubitative', and one reported evidential *-man*. Candelário told me many stories, and we even conducted conversations in Bare, with him taking the lead.\(^{50}\) There was not a single occurrence of the reported evidential. Instead, Candelário used various forms of the verb *-ma* 'to say'.

The fate of various Nambiquara groups in the recent years has been sad — no wonder they are the Indians from the 'Sad Tropics', the *Tristes tropiques*, by Claude Lévy-Strauss. No
wonder that many of these languages are now hardly spoken at all. Gabriel Antunes de Araujo and Stella Telles each worked with a moribund Nambiquara variety: Sabanê and Latundê/Lakondê. If you compare the rich systems in Southern Nambiquara and in Mamaindê with those in their moribund relative, you will be struck by how 'simple' the dying varieties are.

Latundê and Lakondê are two dialects, both from the Northern Nambiquara branch, just like Mamaindê. Lakondê is spoken by just one woman, and Latundê by about 18 people. Lakondê has evidentials: a past tense form appears to be used when the speaker saw something. And if she had inferred something, she would use a complex construction with a verb 'have the impression'. If she didn't see what she is talking about, she uses a suffix translated as 'it is possible that'. Both Lakondê and Latundê distinguish between a secondhand report — something the speaker was told about by someone non-identifiable or irrelevant, — and a quotative, when the speaker knows exactly who told them that:51

9.66 ã-'pat-ho'te-'ten-''se?-Ø-tân-hi

AGENTIVE-leave-for.somebody-DES-EVID:REP-3SUBJ-IMPF-NEUTER

'She is going to leave it for me, I heard' (from unidentifiable or irrelevant source)

9.67 mân-Ø-setaw-'tân-hi

burn-3SUBJ-EVID:QUOT-IMPF-NEUTER

'The house burned, someone (identifiable) told me'

At present, most Latundê/Lakondê speakers are proficient in Portuguese, the language of their day-to-day life. And the evidentials are often not used at all: instead, speakers prefer
to use longer sentences: 'she left, I saw (it)/I didn't see it/ I heard it' and so on (Telles 2002: 290). Instead of using a quotative evidential -setaw-, a speaker would say:

9.68 hejn-ka-Ø-’tân    hajn-Ø-’tân
wash-BENEF-3SUBJ-IMPF    say-3SUBJ-IMPF

'He washed (clothes), he (himself) says'

And instead of inserting the reported -’se?i, they would say:

9.69 hejn-ka-Ø-’tân    āw-Ø-’tân
wash-BENEF-3SUBJ-IMPF    tell-3SUBJ-IMPF

'He washed (clothes), they tell'

This phenomenon — called 'grammatical reduction' — is fairly typical of languages on their way out.

9.8 What are evidentials good for?

Evidentials are a key to successful communication. And they reflect ways of thinking and representing reality and stereotypes. They are also indicative of the history of languages and people who speak them.

What does the map of South America tell us about the spread of evidentiality? Firstly, it looks as if evidentials are found in just about every family, and every nook and cranny of the continent. The most complicated systems — of four or five terms — are in the Amazonian North-west. This is what we saw in Tuyuca, Tariana and Hup — from different language families interacting with each other. Bora-Witoto, at least some Yanomami languages, and
Carib languages also have complex evidentials. But other Arawak languages in the area (such as Yucuna, Piapoco and Baniwa of Içana) have just one, reported evidential. So does Nadëb, the only Makú language spoken in the Middle Rio Negro area. Since evidentials are easily spread from one language to the next, we can suggest that most languages originally had just one evidential. When they came in contact with Tucanoan languages, where evidentials were there in the proto-languages, they quickly expanded their systems.52

Not every Amazonian language has evidentials. Aguaruna53 has a special narrative marker, tuwahanĩ. The morphological make-up of this word is obscure, but it is based on the root tu 'say'. No other evidentials have been noted in Jivaroan languages.

South of the Amazon, the Nambiquara languages are the most complex in terms of their evidentials. A few Arawá, Campa (Arawak), Kamaiurá (Tupí-Guaraní) and Panoan languages have elaborate evidential systems. Evidentiality in other Tupí languages remains a puzzle: we need to know more before we can decide whether evidential meanings are indeed distinct from 'probably' and 'maybe'.54

Many Tupí-Guaraní languages appear to have at least two evidentials, distinguished in the past — one firsthand, the other nonfirsthand. This is what we find in Kagwahiv, Kayabí and perhaps also in Guaraní (Waud Kracke, p.c.).

Many languages south of the River have just one, reported, evidential. This has been described for many languages spoken in Bolivia — Cavineña (Tacana), Bolivian Arawak Mojo and Bauré, and even the Panoan outlier in Bolivia, Chácobo. Just some Jê languages have a reported evidential.

We can thus identify a few areas of high concentration of evidentials in the continent — these are shown with circles on Map 9.1. These may be indicative of how evidentials diffuse, and tell us something about traces of language contact.
The systems themselves are tantalizing. Three evidentials in Shipibo-Conibo — sensory, reported and inferred — are rather reminiscent of what we find in Quechua, a trade language from the circum-Amazonian domain. A very similar system — with different forms — was described for Barbacoan languages.\textsuperscript{55} Urarina, an isolate spoken in North-western Peru, has two optional enclitics — one for what the speaker witnessed, and one for what they were told. This appears similar to what Weber and Thiesen (forthcoming) describe for Bora. This could well be a trace of ancient contact.\textsuperscript{56} Like a metal detector, evidentials may reveal something we ought to study more.
Notes

1 A typological framework is in Aikhenvald (2004a, 2006d, 2008d). Additional discussion of
the term 'evidential' and its synonyms is in Jacobsen (1986). The terms 'verificational' and
'validational' are sometimes used in place of 'evidential'. French linguists employ the term
'mediative' (Guentchéva 1996); some use the term aléthique (Francisc Queixalós, p.c.). The
term 'evidential' was first introduced by Jakobson (1957). A summary of work on recognising
this category, and naming it, is in Jacobsen (1986) and Aikhenvald (2004a).

We need always to keep in mind that evidentiality is a verbal grammatical category in its
own right and it does not bear any straightforward relationship to truth, the validity of a
statement or the speaker's responsibility. Evidentials may have extensions to do with
certainty, uncertainty, probability, doubt and commitment or lack thereof. But the presence of
such extensions does not make evidentials into 'modals', a subcategory of epistemic or any
other modality, nor of irrealis. This can be compared to gender systems: in many languages
feminine gender is associated with diminution, or endearment (see numerous examples in
Aikhenvald 2003a), and masculine gender with augmentative; this however does not mean
that gender is a type of diminutive or augmentative category.

Systems of several evidentials have been described for a handful of Tibeto-Burman
languages and some languages of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Until we learn more
about these, the diversity of evidentials throughout Amazonia remains unrivaled.


3 Another example of an evidential with a similar meaning comes from Yongning Na
(Mosuo), a Tibeto-Burman language (Lidz 2007).


5 And see §9.3. Similar, two-term, systems have been described for the Yanam variety of
Yanomami (Gomez 1990: 97), Secoya and Koreguaje (both West Tucanoan: Terry Malone,


7 Guillaume (2008: 643-5).

8 Floyd (2005).


10 Smeets (2007: 246-7; 110), Zúñiga (ms).

11 This meaning — called 'mirative' in the linguistics literature — covers surprise, new
information and 'unprepared mind' in general. It is a typical extension of a non-firsthand
evidential, and has been described in detail for languages of Eurasia. See a summary in Aikhenvald (2004a).

12 These examples come from Wanka Quechua (Floyd 1997: 71, 1999: 48). Other Quechua varieties have somewhat different forms. A similar system is found in Sabanê, a Nambiquara language (Eberhard ms, 2009).


15 Fleck (2007: 603). This appears to be a feature of the Mayoruna subgroup of Panoan.


18 Valenzuela (2003: 37; 39; 440); p.c.


24 The meanings of evidentials overlap with expectation, attitude to information. Thus, Cavineña has a special marker =tukwe 'contrary to evidence', and Tucano has baa for 'obvious evidence'. Karo, from the Ramarama subgroup of the Tupí family, is said to have over ten evidential-like meanings, including visual, hearsay, 'lost evidence', 'from evidence', 'from expectation', 'from pattern', or 'be supposed to', belief 'I guess', probability with no evidence, probability with evidence, dubious probability ('I wonder'), and lack of probability ('maybe') (Gabas Júnior 1999: 266). Not all these meanings refer to information source: they cover epistemic modality, certainty and attitude to information, that is, belief. A more in-depth analysis of a tantalizing system like this one is needed before we can properly assess its status.


27 Other languages which have more than one evidential per clause include Shipibo-Konibo (Valenzuela 2003: 44-6), Xamatauteri (Ramirez 1994: 317), and Tsafiki (Dickinson 2000), a Barbacoan language from the circum-Amazonian domain. In Jarawara (Dixon 2003: 178), most traditional tales are told using the far past non-eyewitness evidential accompanied by the
reported marker). And in Mamaindê, a Nambiquara language, a secondhand and a thirdhand evidential may each be accompanied by non-visual evidential (Eberhard 2009: 460-62). That is, the reported evidential behaves differently from other evidentials. This suggests that it may a different system, a topic which requires further exploration.

28 Eberhard (2009: 464-5) provides similar examples for Mamaindê, a Nambiquara language.


32 This example comes from Dixon (2003: 171). In Mamaindê, an inferred evidential would be used in the same way (Eberhard 2009: 466-7). A similar example from Mapundungun is 9.9. See Monserrat and Dixon (2003) on Mýky.

33 Weber and Thiesen (forthcoming 256).


35 An overwhelming majority of languages with evidentiality systems in declarative clauses make no evidentiality distinctions in imperative clauses (see references in Aikhenvald 2004a)


37 Details on Mýky are in Monserrat and Dixon (2003); for Matses see Fleck (2007).

38 See Valenzuela (2003: 34), on Shipibo-Konibo.


41 Kracke (2010: 73).

42 This is similar to speech behaviour of the Yavapai Indians who tend to use 'they say' in their English, as an equivalent to the nonfirsthand evidential in their native tongue: (Bunte and Kendall 1981: 5). The Indian English is seen as 'pedantic' and strange, to outsiders.

43 One of the few remaining Tariana elders was said (behind his back) to be 'useless': one of the reasons was that he was not using the correct form of the reported evidential (see Aikhenvald 2004a: 336-7). A major token of 'correct' Tariana is the ability to use evidentials in the right way (see details in Aikhenvald 2002a: 213-20).


45 Silver and Miller (1997: 37), Hardman (1986). David Eberhard, in his analysis of Mamaindê, remarks: 'After living in the Mamaindê culture off and on for over 18 years, I do not see any basis for the supposition that they have a stronger than normal concern for truth.
The evidential system, in fact, can be taken advantage of and exploited quite ingeniously for the express purpose of living, not only about content, but also about one's degree of involvement in a given situation. My best hypothesis is that the Mamaindê evidentiality system has more to do with a desire to save face, or to safeguard one's own reputation' (Eberhard 2009: 468).

46 Tariana and Tucano speakers grumble that Portuguese sounds like a 'shortcut'. Hardman (1986: 133) reports how difficult it is for Jaqi (Aymara) speakers to imagine how one can speak a language which does not mark the information source. Finally she and her colleagues had to 'adjust their English' and always specify how they knew things, so as not to upset their Jaqi-speaking friends.


50 See Aikhenvald (1995-a), (forthcoming-b), for further details.


52 See Aikhenvald and Dixon (1998), Aikhenvald (2003c).


54 This is an issue for many other languages, including Bolivian isolates Yurakaré and Movima (van Gijn 2006, Haude 2006).


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>EVIDENTIAL IN QUESTION</strong></th>
<th><strong>MEANING OF AN EVIDENTIAL</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>1. Addressee saw something which the speaker did not (or did) see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Speaker is sure the addressee saw the fact and knows it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Addressee is held responsible for the action: accusation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-visual</td>
<td>1. Addressee has not seen it (they may have heard it, or smelt it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Addressee may not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Addressee may not be really responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumed</td>
<td>1. Addressee does not have any firsthand information about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Addressee is not knowledgeable (they do not know enough)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 9.1 How to choose the right evidential?

**What we see is what is most important and valuable.**

If there is something you see, you could also hear it or smell it. You have enough visual evidence to infer what it is, and often times someone rushes in to tell you all about it. It may also be the most logical thing.

This is why, if you have access to various evidential and various information sources, this is how you are going to choose:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual evidential</th>
<th>1st choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-visual evidential</td>
<td>2nd choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferred evidential based on visual evidence</td>
<td>3rd choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported evidential</td>
<td>4th choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumed evidential</td>
<td>Last choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 9.2 'White people are liars'

The history of the interactions between Indians and the White colonizers has been marked by conflict, bloodshed and misunderstanding. In many South American countries, Indians are still considered the lowest of the low. Indians reciprocate: White people have enviable resources and they are rich. But they are not to be relied on because of how they talk. When Indians speak contact languages — Spanish and Portuguese, they often try to say what is important in their mother tongues. A most important thing to say is 'how you know things'. Those who omit to say this are dangerous liars, unless they are not quite right in their head.

A missionary comes and starts preaching. He states that Adam ate the apple in the Garden of Eden — and uses visual or 'personal knowledge' evidential. An Aymara, a Tucano or a Tariana speaker, looks at him suspiciously: has he really seen it? Could he have been present in the Garden of Eden. Or is he telling a lie?

A Peace Corps volunteer, reading from a book, states as personal knowledge that certain seeds yield good crops. A Aymara speaker looks at him with suspicion: 'he cannot possibly have seen this — is he trying to deceive' us? (Silver and Miller 1997: 36; Hardman 1986: 133). Those who come into Jaqi (Aymara) communities from outside and 'state as personal knowledge … facts which they know only through language (e.g. things they have read in books) are immediately categorised as cads, as people who behave more like animals than humans and, therefore, ought to be treated like animals, specifically, through the loss of linguistic interchange' (Hardman 1986: 133). The Aymara concern for precise data source often results in misunderstandings and cultural 'clashes'. Miracle and Yapita Moya (1981: 53) mention incredulous responses of the Aymara to statements in some written texts like 'Columbus discovered America'; 'was the author actually there' to see? They react with incredulity to 'new (unseen) ideas' such as astronauts visiting the moon. This creates an image of socio-cultural conservatism. And, as a result, some Western writers see the Aymara as 'negative, unimaginative, suspicious, and skeptical'.

As Hardman (1986: 131) puts it, 'the skilful and accurate use of the data-source discourse devices at their command is highly esteemed by the Jaqi people; minimum competent use is a prerequisite to a claim to human status'. People who cannot use the evidentials correctly are not worth talking to.

Martha Hardman (1986: 132-3) reminds us: every Aymara child is taught two important proverbs:
'Seeing, one can say: "I have seen", without seeing one must not say "I have seen' 
'Seeing, speak; without seeing, don't speak' 

How can our priest talk about the Brazilian government if he hasn't seen it? He is a liar — said a Tariana speaker. And then he added: 'We have proof of that: he never does what he promises'.