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What everybody knows

Expressing shared knowledge thorough evidentials

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Every language has a variety of ways of expressing how one knows what one is talking about. In quite a few of the world's languages, one has to always specify the information source through grammatical means. Evidential terms may combine reference to the information sources of the speaker and of the addressee and to information shared by everyone. A special term for 'common knowledge' is a feature of a few large systems of evidentials. Sharing information source and common knowledge may constitute part of the meaning of an existing evidential within a large system. Shared context allows speakers and the audience to distinguish the exact reference of each evidential term. If a language becomes obsolescent, the meanings of the evidential terms change. This is illustrated with a case study from Tariana, an endangered Arawak language from north-west Amazonia, Brazil.

1. Preamble: Evidentials, information source, and shared knowledge

Every language has a variety of ways for expressing how one knows what one is talking about. In more than a quarter of the world's languages, one has to always specify the information source through grammatical means. Evidentiality – grammaticalized marking of information source – is a versatile phenomenon. In some systems, one has to just specify whether the information was obtained via a speech report, leaving other sources vague. In others, one has to indicate whether the speaker saw the event happen, didn't see it but heard it (or smelt it), made an inference about it based on visible traces, reasoning or common knowledge, or was told about it.

Information source, or the source of knowledge, can be expressed with multiple means. Evidentiality involves expressing it through grammar. This is not unlike time which can be grammatically expressed through tense, or though lexical and other means (further discussion is in Aikhenvald 2021a, 2018, 2004). Obligatory evidentiality is a feature of many languages of the Americas, Australia, New Guinea,

and across Eurasia, especially the Caucasus, North-east India, and Tibet. Evidentials may have clausal or sentential scope (that is, be associated with the predicate). They are the focus of this study. Evidentials with non-propositional, or noun-phrase level, scope (see Aikhenvald 2021a: 40–48; Jacques 2018) are beyond our purview here. Recurrent semantic parameters which acquire grammatical expression in evidential systems across the world are shown in Scheme 1 (Aikhenvald 2018: 12):

Scheme 1. Recurrent meanings in evidential systems
I.   VISUAL covers information acquired through seeing.
II.   SENSORY covers information through hearing, and is typically extended to smell and taste, and sometimes also touch.
III. INFERENCE covers information based on visible or tangible evidence, or visible results.
IV.   ASSUMPTION covers information based on reasoning and conjecture (and not on visible results).
V.   REPORTED covers reported information with no reference to who it was reported by.
VI.   QUOTATIVE covers reported information with an overt reference to the quoted source.

Further differentiations within these groups of meanings may include the degrees of verbal report (see also Aikhenvald 2004: 59). Mamaindê, a Nambikwaran language from southern Amazonia in Brazil, distinguishes secondhand and thirdhand reported evidentials (Eberhard 2018: 337–41). Tatuyo, an East Tukanoan language from the Vaupés River Basin linguistic area in Colombia, distinguishes between two kinds of visual evidential – a simple visual and a distal visual (for something seen from afar) (Stenzel & Gomez-Imbert 2018: 365).

Evidentials may be semantically complex. They may reflect attitude to knowledge – whether the speaker is sure about what they know, or have doubts about this. Attitude to knowledge – and its evaluation as probable, possible, or certain – are typically expressed through epistemic modality (see Wiemer 2018 on correlations between evidentiality and epistemic modality, and their status as separate grammatical categories). Evidentials may have meanings related to mirativity– or expectation of knowledge, covering speaker's surprise and unprepared mind (more on this in Aikhenvald 2012a, 2021a: 16–28 and references there). And they may also reflect access to information by the speaker and the addressee and information sharing between them. In this way, an evidential will overlap with the domain of egophoricity, or privileged access to information source (as defined by DeLancey 2018; see also Bai 2020: 241–245, and references there).

How can evidentials be used to express general knowledge – what everybody knows and has access to? This is the topic of my paper.

2.   General knowledge though evidentials: The problem

Information sharing and access to information source can constitute the core meaning of an evidential. In a number of languages, we find a special term referring to 'general knowledge', going beyond the list of previously established semantic parameters (see Scheme 1). This is a feature of a few multi-term systems with at least three other evidential terms (whose meaning is restricted to information source).

A special evidential referring to common knowledge shared by all members of the speech community has been documented for Yongning Na (Mosuo), a Tibeto-Burman language (Lidz 2007). The language also has direct (or visual), inferential, reported and quotative evidential. The common knowledge evidential in Yongning Na 'receives epistemic readings of a good degree of certainty, as it indicates that something is generally accepted as being true' (Lidz 2007: 60). A common knowledge evidential is also found in a number of Tibetic (Tibeto-Burman) languages, such as Brokpa (Wangdi 2021), and in Kalmyk and in Buryat, Mongolic languages (Brosig & Skribnik 2018).

A special term within the system of evidentials expresses 'general knowledge' in Mamaindê and Southern Nambikwara (both from the Nambikwaran family, from Central Brazil: Eberhard 2018: 337–341, 348–350, 353–356). The evidential refers to 'knowledge that is known (or available to be known) by the whole community as part of the habitual experience of a collective, or part of the body of knowledge that has been passed down from one generation to the next, such as the extensive Nambikwaran mythology' (Eberhard 2018: 339). Generally known information as part of the community's mythological lore and heritage reflects the most common usage of the corresponding evidential in Mamaindê. The language adds to this a visual, a non-visual, and an inferred evidential, plus two reported markers: one expressing secondhand information, and the other one expressing third-hand information (Eberhard 2018: 349, and Aikhenvald 2021a: 66–68). Similarly to Yongning Na, the general knowledge evidential in Mamaindê has epistemic overtones of reliability and trustworthiness, as it reflects century-old tradition and lore that 'everyone knows'. In contrast, the two reported evidentials which have overtones of doubt (Eberhard 2018: 349, 353).

Common knowledge, or general knowledge, shared by the interlocutors and seen as 'available' to everyone, can constitute part of the meaning of an existing evidential within a large system. Shared context allows speakers and the audience to distinguish the exact reference of each evidential term. If a language – and the traditional lore associated with it – become obsolescent, the meanings of the evidential terms may change.

We will illustrate this with a case study from Tariana, an endangered Arawak language from north-west Amazonia, Brazil.

3.   Common knowledge and knowledge sharing in Tariana evidentials

Tariana, an Arawak language, is spoken by c. 70 people in the Vaupés River Basin Linguistic area of northwest Amazonia (Brazil). The area is known for its multilingual exogamy: one can only marry someone who speaks a different language and belongs to a different tribe (see Aikhenvald 2012b: 73–83 for the history and the composition of the area).[1] Descent is strictly patrilineal, and consequently, one identifies with one's father's language group. There is a strong cultural inhibition against 'language-mixing', viewed in terms of lexical loans. In its grammatical structure Tariana combines a number of features inherited from proto-Arawak, with numerous grammatical categories developed under areal influence from East Tukanoan languages.

In its declarative clauses, Tariana distinguishes five evidentials partly fused with tenses (which shows striking structural similarities with neighbouring East Tukanoan languages).[2] In § 3.1, we start with the recurrent meanings of Tariana evidentials Interrelations between evidentials and tense are discussed in § 3.2. In § 3.3 we turn to shared information source and general knowledge as semantic components of the evidentials. The effect of language and culture obsolescence on the use of evidentials is the topic of § 3.4.

3.1   The meanings of Tariana evidentials

Evidentials as exponents of information source in Tariana have the following meanings.

–   Visual evidentials are used if the speaker has seen the event or the state, or the event can be easily observed.
–   Nonvisual evidentials refer to something heard, or smelt, or felt by touch (or something one can not quite discern).
–   Inferred evidentials refer to something inferred based on visible results: for instance, that it has rained because one can see the puddles.

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1.   This chapter is based on over thirty years work with the Tariana. My corpus consists of over thirty hours of recordings (including texts of various genres and conversations), and is being constantly expanded. All examples in this chapter (as in my other work) are taken from natural discourse and narrative (I avoid elicitation). A comprehensive grammar of the language is in Aikhenvald (2003). The examples are given in practical orthography.

2.   Evidentiality subsystems in interrogative and imperative clauses in Tariana are discussed in Aikhenvald (2003, 2021a); they are a topic for a separate study.

- – ASSUMED EVIDENTIALS are used if a statement is based on reasonable assumption and general knowledge.
- – REPORTED EVIDENTIALS are employed if the information comes from a speech report by someone else (without specifying the exact source of a speech report)

The following examples illustrate five real-life situations. Evidentials were straight-forwardly used to express different information sources for the speaker (from author's fieldwork). Evidentials are in italics throughout the paper.

(1) iya   di-hwa-*naka*   kiaku
     rain 3SGNF-fall-PRES.VIS strong
     'It is raining strongly' (the speaker is looking out of the window and can see the rain)

(2) iya   di-hwa-*mha*   kiaku
     rain 3SGNF-fall-PRES.NONVIS strong
     'It is raining strongly' (the speaker can hear the rain, but cannot see it)

(3) iya   di-hwa-*nihka*   kiaku
     rain 3SGNF-fall-REC.P.INFR strong
     'It has rained strongly' (the speaker can see the traces of the rain, e.g. puddles)

(4) iya   di-hwa-*sika*   kiaku
     rain 3SGNF-fall-REC.PAST.ASSUM strong
     'It has rained strongly' (the speaker assumes it because the grass looks very green)

(5) iya   di-hwa-*pidaka*   kiaku
     rain 3SGNF-fall-RECENT.PAST.REPORTED strong
     'It rained strongly' (the speaker was recently told by someone else)

The speaker will be likely to have access to more than one information source at the same time. If you see something, you may very well hear it as well, smell it, have enough visual evidence to make an inference, and so on. In general, visually obtained information, if available, would be preferred to any other, competing, information source. Barnes (1984: 262) reported the same principle for Tuyuca, an East Tukanoan language spoken in the Colombian part of Vaupés River Basin linguistic area. The next preferred choice will be nonvisual evidential, then inferred based on visible results, then reported, and only then assumed. These preferences outlined in Scheme 2 reflect the choices one would tend to make if more than one information source is available.

> Scheme 2. Hierarchy of preferred evidentials in Tariana: A general tendency
> Visual < Nonvisual < Inferred < Reported < Assumed

This scheme offers just a general indication of what one might expect. The actual choice of preferred information source will be determined by a number of further parameters, including

a.   what kind of access speaker has to information,
b.   the type of information, and
c.   the status of the speaker within the community.

For instance, no matter whether or not one sees the shaman perform his duties, the appropriate way will be to talk about them using a non-visual evidential. Shamanic dreams are cast in visual evidential. In contrast, a dream by a common mortal will always be treated as 'non-visual' – casting it in visual evidential would either imply that the speaker is not quite competent or that they betray special powers and their dream has a prophetic and thus supernatural quality. Non-visual evidentials are also the preferred choice for a description of one's feelings and mental and physical states, as in (13), and also thinking and internal speech, as in (12). The principles of evidential choice is embedded within the Tariana system of beliefs and attitudes to knowledge. Preferences which govern these choices are intrinsically linked with access to knowledge and can be manipulated in natural discourse to reflect speakers' stance, attitudes, and even societal changes (more on this in Aikhenvald 2021b).

3.2   Evidentials and tense

Visual, nonvisual, and reported evidentials distinguish three tenses. The inferred and the assumed evidential have just two – they do not have present tense (this gap is consistent with their meanings: an inference or an assumption will be made based on visual traces or reasoning preceding the actual event: see Aikhenvald 2018). The evidential markers are floating clitics, and can attach to the verb or to any topical constituent within the clause. The forms of evidentials in three tenses in declarative clauses are listed in Table 1.

Evidential forms contain segmentable tense markers: the recent past marker *-ka* and the remote past marker *-na* (present forms can be considered zero-marked). There is phonological fusion on the respective boundaries (in agreement with principles described in Aikhenvald 2003: 46–53). The visual evidential is less formally marked than others (the issues of formal and functional markedness in evidential systems are addressed in Aikhenvald 2004: 70–77).

The tense forms of evidentials in Tariana and in the neighbouring East Tukanoan languages of the Vaupés River Basin contain reference to the time of acquisition of information, and whether the information is still accessible (Aikhenvald 2003: 289,

Table 1. Evidentials and tense in declarative clauses in Tariana

Evidentials/tenses	Present	Recent past	Remote past
Visual	*-naka*	*-ka*	*-na*
Nonvisual	*-mha*	*-mahka*	*-mhana*
Inferred	-	*-nihka*	*-nhina*
Assumed	-	*-sika*	*-sina*
Reported	*-pida*	*-pidaka*	*-pidana*

2004: 100–102; Ramirez 1997: 125–126; Stenzel & Gomez-Imbert 2018: 378–379). A Tariana speaker was asked if he had the key to the house in his possession. He answered (6): he had seen the key lying in the house some time ago (but could not see it now).

(6)   panisi-se   di-hwa-*na*
      house-LOC 3SGNF-stay/lie-REM.P.VIS
      'It was (there)' (I saw it some time ago)

Along similar lines, a reported evidential in Tariana marks the time of the speech report (not that of the event). In (7), the speaker was told recently that his elder sister had arrived in Manaus.

(7)   nu-phe-ru   duka-*pidaka*   Bara-se
      1SG-elder.sister-FEM   3SGF+arrive-REC.P.REP   Manaus-LOC
      'My elder sister arrived in Manaus' (I was told recently)

In (8), the speaker was told a week or so ago that his elder sister had arrived in Manaus.

(8)   nu-phe-ru   duka-*pidana*   Bara-se
      1SG-elder.sister-FEM   3SGF+arrive-REM.P.REP   Manaus-LOC
      'My elder sister arrived in Manaus' (I was told some time ago, e.g. a week)

Along similar lines, evidentials in Matses, a Panoan language of Peru, reflect the time of the information source, rather than that of the event (Fleck 2007; a similar phenomenon for remembered events in Turkish – describing the past experience one recalls – was described by Johanson & Csató ms).

3.3   Shared information source and general knowledge through Tariana evidentials

Tariana evidentials show additional semantic complexity, including correlations with access to knowledge and knowledge sharing.

In many languages with evidentiality, the visual, or the direct, term is used to refer to generally known observable facts (see examples from Tariana, Quechua, and Shipibo-Konibo in Aikhenvald 2004: 167–173; see also Adelaar 1977: 673 and Faller 2002: 20). A Tariana will use the present visual evidential for these. A description of the 'month of an armadillo' (which takes place around January) is in (9) (Aikhenvald & the Brito family 2002: 63).

(9)   diha di-keña-*naka*   ye   na:-*naka*   na-nu   kasitelu
      it   3SGNF-start-PRES.VIS armadillo 3PL+go-PRES.VIS 3PL-come sauva.ant
      nha-nuku   nawiki nhepa   na-hña-*naka*
      they-TOP.NON.A/S people 3PL+catch 3PL-eat-PRES.VIS
      'It (the month) starts, the armadillo (month), sauva-ants come, people get (and) eat (them)'

An evidential may express general facts, known not to be observable by the human eye. The actions of evil spirits and supernatural activities of shamans and sorcerers are always cast in non-visual evidentials (or non-witnessed or indirect evidentials in other languages: see Carlin 2018 for Cariban languages, and a brief summary in Aikhenvald 2021b). What an evil spirit does to a human it attacks is stated in (10). Since the spirit's actions cannot be seen, the general knowledge is expressed through non-visual evidential – the commonly available information source for this kind of experience.

(10) nawiki i-liki-nuku   di-pusu-*mha*   diha ñamu
      people INDEF-brain-TOP.NON.A/S 3SGNF-suck-PRES.NONVIS ART evil.spirit
      'Evil spirit sucks person's brain (out)'

Speakers' metalinguistic awareness of evidentials is reflected in their explanations and comments provided. The use of a non-visual evidential to refer to an evil spirit has been explained to me as 'we cannot see them'. A description of shamanic actions by a common mortal always involves a non-visual evidential. This was commented on as 'the shaman does this with his mind, we cannot see it' (see also Aikhenvald 2004: 339–342). The use of a visual evidential can be accompanied by a lexical comment, 'I saw (it)', as lexical reinforcement of information source. Along similar lines, Turkish-speaking children (Aksu-Koç 1988: 157) can provide verbal justification for the use of evidentials, as they acquire them, in the spirit of 'he can't say anything because he did not see the event happen'.

The inferred evidential reflects access to knowledge and also information shar-
ing. It is the preferred choice if the speaker had access to visual traces of an event
or a state and the addressee did not, that is if information source is not shared by
speech act participants. Example (3) is used if the speaker can see the traces of the
rain, e.g. puddles. It can be also used, if the addressee is inside the house and can-
not see what's happening oustide, and the speaker goes out and sees the rain. The
speaker will then say (3) to the addressee on returning to the house. The evidential
contains reference to the time of the acquisition of information, in agreement with
the general meaning of tense in Tariana evidentials.

Along similar lines, after a payment had come through to his account, Jovino
Brito said to me, in a voice message via WhatsApp. (Jovino had visual access to his
bank account, while I did not.)

(11) dineiru konta-se   alia-*nihka*
      money   account-LOC exist-REC.P.INFR
      'Money is in the account'

A brief explanation for this, in Portuguese, was 'falando para outro, ele não viu'
(talking to someone else, he hasn't seen it) (see Ramirez 1997: 140, for a similar
usage of inferred evidentials in Tucano).

The assumed evidential whose main meaning can be described as assumption
based on reasoning and logical inference from general facts is a common means for
describing knowledge sharing and common background – something 'everybody
knows'. An example is in (4). Another example is in (12). Diká, one of the oldest
speakers of the language, told an autobiographical story about how he had run into
a snake while collecting rubber in the jungle. It got dark, and he could no longer
see the snake. He then said (12) to himself, using the assumed evidential. A rough
translation into English is 'the snake must have gone away (this is what snakes do)'.
Note that there is no modal implication: 'must' is an English translation which does
not do justice to the meaning of the evidential (see the discussion in Aikhenvald
2021a: 81–83).

(12) di-a-*sika*-khani   nu-a-*mhana*
      3SGNF-go-REC.P.ASSUM-AWAY 1SG-say-REM.P.NONVIS
      'He went away (logically assuming), I said (internally)'

The non-visual evidential reflects internal speech, or thought: Diká was alone, and
not talking out loud. The assumed evidential reflects the logical conclusion that
the snake had gone away (as expected, based on previous experience and what one
knows about snakes). In actual fact, Diká turned out to be mistaken: the snake was
sitting waiting for him, and he had to run up a tree to escape it. This shows that an

assumption, no matter how logical, is not infallible. A brief explanation for such use in Portuguese was *só pode ser* ('can only be (thus)').

A similar example is in (13), from a voice message by Oli, one of the oldest female speakers of the language and my adopted sister, via Whatsapp. Brazilian Amazonia was hard hit by Covid-19. Oli is complaining about herself and her younger brothers being sick. She knows that our daughter Laura has been in touch with me the previous day asking for money, and thus uses the recent past assumed evidential to refer to the fact that Laura must have told me about what's happening to Oli and the family. The recent past refers to the timing of her assumption (made the previous day). She then uses the non-visual evidential to describe her state of being sick (in agreement with the principle mentioned in § 3.1).

> (13) wa-itu   du-kalite-*sika*   pina   nu-kamia-ka-*mha*
>   1PL-daughter 3SGF-tell-REC.P.ASSUM 2SG-OBJ 1SG-fall.ill-DECL-PRES.NONVIS
>   nuha wa-kamia-ka-*mha*   wha ai-nuku
>   I   1SG-fall.ill-DECL-PRES.NONVIS we   here-TOP.NON.A/S
>   nu-we-ne-ne   ne   macha-kade-*mha*
>   1SG-younger.sibling-PL-COMIT NEG good-NEG-PRES.NONVIS
>   'Our daughter has told you (I assume), I am sick, we are here sick, (me) with my younger siblings, we are not well'

A remote past assumed evidential can refer to an assumption based on logical reasoning and made some time prior to the moment of speech. Example (14) comes from a story told by the late Américo Brito about the price of goods in the region (in the context of his white boss not having paid him enough to be able to afford these).

> (14) diha produto   kaweni-tha-*sina*   mẽda
>   ART   produce/goods expensive-FRUST-REM.P.ASSUM indeed
>   'The goods were expensive indeed' (based on assumption and to the speaker's frustration)

The remote past assumed evidential has another use – to describe general knowledge and tradition. It was further explained to me, in Portuguese, as *todo mundo sabe* ('everyone knows') – underscoring the component of shared common knowledge by speaker, addressee, and everyone else. The basis for 'assumption' is shared expertise and shared knowledge obtained through generation-old tradition.

The remote past form of the assumed evidential is the preferred choice for traditional stories relating Tariana lore – including the origin myths and accounts of the travels of the ancestors. This is similar to the way the 'general knowledge' evidential is used in Mamaindê and Southern Nambikwara (as mentioned in § 2, based on Eberhard 2018). Example (15) comes from a traditional account of how women and

non-initiated youngesters had lost access to the sacred Yurupary flutes, *Piri* (which they are now not allowed to see, for fear of death) (see also Aikhenvald 2021a: 78).

(15) hiku-*sina*   wathanina-se nu-a-ka   pi-na   ne   inaru
      be.thus-REM.P.ASSUM beginning-LOC 1SG-say-SEQ 2SG-OBJ NEG woman
      pa:-ma   ma-ka-kade-*sina*   ne-pedalia-ma-misini
      one-CL:FEM NEG-see-NEG-REM.P.ASSUM NEG-old-CL:FEM-TOO
      ne-ma-ka-kade-*sina*   ne-yanape   ne-ma-ka-kade-*sina*
      NEG-NEG-see-NEG-REM.P.ASSUM NEG-children NEG-see-NEG-REM.P.ASSUM
      'This has been the case from the beginning, as I am saying to you, woman could
      see (it), nor an old woman, nor children'

The story is part of traditional knowledge, and is cast in remote past assumed evidential. A similar example is in (16). The speaker is telling a story belonging to the realm of the traditional lore, about how the life used to be, back in the olden days.

(16) Kayka nha matsia na-siwa nhepa   na-de-*sina*   haniri diha
      thus   they well   3PL-self 3PL+answer 3PL-have-REM.P.ASSUM father he
      di-kalite-*sina*   diri   tsiali alia-ka-nuku
      3SGNF-tell-REM.P.ASSUM 3SGNF+son man be-SEQ-TOP.NON.A/S
      'Thus they respected each other well (lit. answered-had), listening, the father
      told his son (how to behave) when he became a man'

Stories of little cultural import – including ad hoc hunting stories, tales about animals and jokes – are typically cast in reported evidential, as something one has heard from someone else. Autobiographical narratives are told using visual evidential.

  If a funny ad-hoc story is cast in remote past assumed evidential, as if it were a traditonal tale, this sounds like a joke. In (17), the late Graciliano Brito started telling a story about a competition between a wild pig and a deer. In the first line, (17a), the narrative was introduced as a 'playful untrue' story. Note that Tariana does not distinguish evidentiality in future tense.

(17) a. Ikasupia-nuku   i-na   kalisi pa-maña-nipe pa-manika
          now-TOP.NON.A/S 2PL-OBJ story IMPERS-lie-NOM IMPERS-play
          nu-kalite-mhade
          1SG-tell-FUT
          'I will now tell you a playful untrue story'

He then used assumed evidential as if this were a traditional story of some import (17b). The audience laughed.

(17) b. Alia-*sina*   nha ñhamepa-*sina*   ñamulitu
be-REM.P.ASSUM they two+CL.HUM-REM.P.ASSUM wild.pig
ne:ri-ne-*sina*
deer-COMIT-REM.P.ASSUM
'There were them two, wild pig and deer' (Audience laughs)

He then carried on, using the reported evidential, as befits a story of this kind.

(17) c. Diha ñamulitu awakada-se-*pidana*   dí-ña.   Pa:-kada   nha
ART wild.pig jungle-LOC-REM.P.REP 3SGNF-live one-CL:DAY they
ñhamepa   na-keta-*pidana*   awakada-se-nuku   na-siwa-kaka
two+CL.HUM 3PL-meet-REM.P.REP jungle-loc-top.non.a/s 3PL-self-REC
na-sape-*pidana*
3PL-talk-REM.P.REP
'The wild pig reportedly lived in the jungle. One day the two met in the jungle and spoke to each other…'

This example highlights the versatility of evidentials, and how a proficient speaker can manipulate them, to produce a joking effect.

The assumed evidential is conventionally used by representatives of all generations of speakers to talk about what they had read, and in translations. All of the extant speakers, except for two elders, are functionally literate. A popular Brazilian song 'Dois patinhos na lagoa começaram à nadar' (Two ducklings in a lake started swimming) was translated by Rafael Brito, one of the youngest speakers, using the assumed evidential. The first two lines of the song go like this (18):

(18) ñhamepa   kumada-tupe kalisana-dawa-se na-yha
two+CL:HUMAN duck-PL.DIM lake-CL:HOLE-LOC 3PL-swim
na-keña-*sina*   kuite   umapi na-ka-ka   na-yha
3PL-start-REM.P.ASSUM what.s.its.name worm 3PL-see-SEQ 3PL-swim
na-keña-*sina*
3PL-start-REM.P.ASSUM
'Two ducklings in a lake started swimming, as they saw what's its name, a worm, they started swimming'

This evidential is also used for retelling what one has read. The story about the origin of the world told by Graciliano Brito based on the Book of Genesis is a case in point – (19) is the beginning of it.

(19) ha-ehkwapi-nuku   yapirikuri walikasu-nuku
      DEM-world-TOP.NON.A/S God   beginning-TOP.NON.A/S
      di-ni-*sina*   walikasu-nuku   ha-ehkwapi-nuku
      3SGNF-do-REM.P.ASSUM beginning-TOP.NON.A/S DEM-world-TOP.NON.A/S
      ne-sede-*sina*   di-yã-nhi
      NEG-NEG.EXIST-REM.P.ASSUM 3SGNF-stay-ANT
      'At the beginning God created this world. At the beginning there was nothing
      in this world'

Similar examples come from the translations of Catholic prayers. (20) contains two
examples, from the Sunday service ('Culto Dominical', a set of prayers read in the
Tariana church and translated in 2000).

(20) a. Yapi|iku|i, phia kayu hiku-peni-*sina*   pi-ni
          God   you   like appear-PL.ANIM-REM.P.ASSUM 2SG-make
          'Lord, you made us in your image' (Portuguese original: *Senhor, à Vossa
          imagem e semelhança nós criastes*)
      b. Wha kepita-ni-kada   phia pi-enipe   kayu
          we   REL+name-PASS-CL:DAY you   2SG-children like
          phipa-*sina*
          2SG+take/accept-REM.P.ASSUM
          'At the time of baptism (lit. name-giving) you accpted (us) as your children'
          (Portuguese original: *Na hora do Batismo como filhos nós aceitastes*)

The correlation between evidential conventions and type of stories is shared with
a few East Tukanoan languages of the area, with which Tariana is in constant con-
tact. In Desano, 'the assumed evidential with past tense is most often used for
legends' (Miller 1999: 67). Along similar lines, for the speakers of Wanano/Kotiria
the assumed evidential is 'the conduit for shared, collective knowledge' (Stenzel &
Gomez-Imbert 2018: 383). In contrast, tales and stories which do not have any par-
ticular significance or import are told using the remote past reported (or hearsay)
evidential, in all these languages, including Tariana. In Miller's (1999: 67) words,
'the hearsay evidential is […] used, especially by the younger generation hearing
the stories from other people'.

   The use of the assumed evidential in traditional stories is reminiscent of the
general knowledge evidential in Nambikwaran languages. The assumed eviden-
tial reflects the lore and the heritage accessible to every member of the Tariana
community.

   In summary, the assumed evidential in Tariana is semantically complex. It
describes:

a.   assumptions based on logical reasoning shared by anyone who has access to reasoning;
b.   the information available to everyone (including reading and translations); and
c.   traditional stories, as part of shared cultural heritage.

The set of meanings under (a) can be expressed with the recent past and remote past assumed evidential forms (*-sika* and *-sina* respectively, as we saw in Examples (12)–(14)). The choice depends on the timing of the logical reasoning, in agreement with the meaning of tense in Tariana evidentials (outliend in § 3.2). The sets of meanings under (b) and (c) are expressed with the remote past assumed evidential: the established shared knowledge is presented as acquired a long time ago.

3.4   Language change and the assumed evidential

The use of evidentials reflects cultural practices and attitudes. Evidentials tend to be sensitive to societal changes, adapting to new ways of obtaining information (including reading, television, phone, and social media). Different speech genres can be characterised by special evidentials as tokens of genres. These features set evidentiality apart from all other categories related to knowledge.

Tariana is an obsolescent language: fewer and fewer people use it on the day-to-day basis. Only those few elders who consider themselves well-versed in the centuries-old knowledge and lore (and are considered so by others) venture to tell traditional stories cast in assumed evidentials. There is thus a correlation between the status of a person within the community, their knowledgeability (acknowledged by them and by others) and the use of the assumed evidential referring to 'shared knowledge'.

As a feature of traditional genres – part of the Tariana heritage and lore – the assumed evidential undergoes partial obsolescence, as there are fewer and fewer elders left to authoritatively share ancestral knowledge. The use of the assumed evidential for mythological lore and traditional stories is on the wane. Its other use – to refer to what one has read or translated – is on the rise.

Similar to most indigenous languages of Lowland Amazonia, Tariana acquired its writing system relatively recently (in the early 1990s). Reading is a new practice. The redeployment of the assumed evidential to talk about what one had read is a testimony to the malleability of an evidential system which incorporates new practices and adjusts to them.

4. To conclude

Evidentials may go beyond the expression of information source. They may express access to knowledge and shared context. In Tariana, an obsolescent Arawak language of north-western Amazonia, knowledge shared by the community – who are 'assumed' to have the common ground and common context – is expressed through assumed remote past evidential. As traditional knowledge is waning, the evidential is redeployed to express other kinds of 'what everybody knows' and what is taken to be accessible to everyone, including a new practice of reading. The versatile evidentials change in agreement with social changes, and the changes in knowledge sharing. In Storch's (2018: 628) words, 'the creativity and dynamics that characterise these ways of indicating source of information and of being precise reach beyond language as structure, and tell us something about social and cultural practices'.

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Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	first, second, third person	PASS	passive
ANT	anterior	PL	plural
ART	article	PL.DIM	plural diminutive
CL:DAY	classifier for days	PRES.NONVIS	present nonvisual
CL:FEM	classifier for feminine entities	PRES.VIS	present visual
CL:HOLE	classifier for holes	REC	reciprocal
CL.HUM	classifier for humans	REC.P.ASSUM	recent past assumed
COMIT	comitative	REC.P.INFR	recent past inferred
DECL	declarative	REC.P.REP	recent past reported
FEM	feminine	REL	relative prefix
FRUST	frustrative	REM.P.ASSUM	remote past assumed
FUT	future	REM.P.NONVIS	remote past nonvisual
IMPERS	impersonal prefix	REM.P.REP	remote past reported
INDEF	indefinite person prefix	REM.P.VIS	remote past visual
LOC	locative case	SEQ	sequential
NEG	negation	SG	singular
NEG.EXIST	negative existential	SGF	singular feminine
NOM	nominalisation	SGNF	singular nofeminine
OBJ	object case	TOP.NON.A/S	topical non-subject

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