

Epistemicity glossary

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The aim of this document is to disentangle and clarify the terminology in epistemicity by 1) gathering the various terms that have been used in the area of epistemicity, and 2) creating/adopting definitions for them. The starting points are Aikhenvald's (2018) evidentiality glossary and Van der Wal & Skopeteas' Glossary of information structure.

Some pointers for use of the glossary:

- When multiple terms are used for one concept, we have sometimes chosen one as the preferred term and refer to that term at the entry of the other terms. We have furthermore indicated synonyms and antonyms, older and newer terms for the same concept, as well as local traditions.
- Blue underlined words are hyperlinks to other terms in the list – you can click them to get to their definition.
- Also note that we distinguish *concepts* (e.g. 'direct evidence') from linguistic *expressions* (e.g. 'direct evidential').
- If we have directly taken a definition from a particular source, we refer to the source; otherwise we have included references for further reading.
- We use the terms 'speaker' and 'addressee' for the speech participants in a conversation, but this should be read as any sender and receiver of information, regardless of the modality of communication (written, signed).
- All CAPS indicates stress in English examples or translations.
- The aim is not to provide a history of the terms, or an overview of how the notions are expressed in languages of the world, but to give a brief indication of the meaning and use of terms.
- Neither is our aim to create a literature overview. When we give further readings suggestions, these are meant to be helpful overviews or articles that directly address the issue, rather than the first publication to mention the term.

If you find any errors or omissions, please help us to improve the glossary by contacting us via maple@hum.leidenuniv.nl.

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A

Aboutness topic, A-topic: the constituent that the [comment](#) is about. For some, this is the general definition of the [topic](#) function, whereas for others aboutness topics are a subtype of topic, involving a less accessible [referent](#).
Further reading: Reinhart (1981).

Absconditive: a linguistic strategy signaling that the addressee should realign their attention to achieve shared access to the relevant information (Olsson 2019).

Access: see [epistemic access](#).

Accessibility, activation: how accessible or active the mental representation of a [referent](#) is. Each referent in our mind is somewhere on a scale between inactive and highly active. Referents can become active or accessible by being present in the context or by being mentioned in the discourse.
Further reading: Ariel (1990), Chafe (1987).

Acquired knowledge:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) knowledge that a speaker has gained [access](#) to.
- (2) alternative definition for [evidentiality](#) in a broader sense, as opposed to [epistemic modality](#) (Tantucci 2013).

Admirative: a mood paradigm encoding various meanings of surprise, disbelief, irony, or report (mainly used for Balkan languages, notably Albanian, see Friedman 2003).
The term inspired the grammatical category of the [mirative](#), see there.

Afterthought: a piece of information that comes after the clause is finished. Typically, the speaker thinks that the addressee can identify the referent and does not mention it fully in the clause, but then adds the explicit information afterwards. For example, 'I put them on the balcony... the flowers, that is'.

Allophoric: see [non-egophoric](#).

Alternative set: the set of alternatives that is triggered for the [focused](#) constituent. The set consists of contextually relevant alternatives: for the sentence 'I saw a MOUSE in the forest', the alternatives for 'mouse' will naturally be other things I could have seen in the forest.
Further reading: Rooth (1992, 1996), Krifka & Musan (2012).

Alterphoric: see [non-egophoric](#).

Anticipation rule: the tendency that in an [egophoric](#) system, the verb marking of questions anticipates the expected answer of the interlocutor. Second person questions take egophoric marking in anticipation of the first person answer, for example 'Have you done_{EGO} the dishes?' is marked as egophoric. First and third person questions take non-egophoric marking in anticipation of second and third

person answers (Hale 1980; Watters 2018: 440; DeLancey 2003; Tournadre & LaPolla 2014). In many languages, the anticipation rule also applies to non-egophoric categories, notably evidentials, which are selected in questions according to what the speaker assumes the addressee will use in their answer (Tournadre 2017). See also [interrogative flip](#) and [egophoric distribution](#).

Anti-potential: form indicating “that an action cannot be performed or that an event has very little probability of happening, whereby the speaker possesses more, as yet undisclosed context information (Storch & Coly 2014: 200). Related to [epistemic modality](#), [egophoricity](#), but also [mirativity](#) when “an agent miraculously performs an action in spite of an obstacle” (Storch & Coly 2014).

Apparent evidential: older term for [inferred evidential](#) – see there.

Approximative (in epistemicity): form expressing doubt, but possibly a higher degree of certainty, translated as ‘it seems, it looks like, probably’; may also have an inferential meaning – see [inferred evidential](#).

Argument focus: [focus](#) narrowly on an argument in the clause. Sometimes conflated with [term focus](#).
Further reading: Lambrecht (1994).

Assertive:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) committing the speaker to the truth of a proposition. In an assertive utterance, the speaker claims that something is the case, for example when saying ‘It’s raining’, I am asserting that this is true and am committed to it.
- (2) old term for [factual](#) in Tibetic linguistics – see there.

Assertive focus: the focus that fills a gap in the addressee’s knowledge by asserting a certain proposition, typically but not necessarily as an answer to a question. See Watters (1979) for an early use. See also [completive focus](#) and [new information focus](#).

Assertor: see [epistemic origo](#).

Assessor shift: see [origo shift](#).

Assumed evidential: an [evidential](#) marker supported by an [assumption](#).

→ Synonym of reasoning evidential, logical inferential, conjectural evidential (in some cases), customary evidential, expectational/expectative evidential.

Assumption (in evidentiality, notably Aikhenvald’s terminology): an [information source](#) involving logic deduction based on knowledge of the world or experience. For example, when it is 11am on a workday and I know that my mother is always at work at that time, I can assume ‘My mum is at work now’. Assumption is usually not based on the current sensory perception (i.e. something one can see “now”) – that

is covered under [inference](#). As opposed to [speculation](#), it does not necessarily encode a degree of likelihood or commitment.
→ Synonym of logical inference.

Asymmetry (in the context of [epistemicity](#)): the state of two (or more) people having unequal access to information, i.e. the speaker knows more than the addressee or vice versa. See also [symmetry](#) and [epistemic primacy](#).

At-issueness: the property of being subject to questioning when an utterance is pronounced. For example, in 'Alex fed the cat' what could be at issue is whether the cat was fed or not, whether it was Alex who did so, and whether it was indeed the cat that was fed, but the existence of Alex or the cat is not at issue. In the area of [epistemicity](#), what can be at issue, for example, is the content of the utterance, the degree of certainty of the speaker, its [information source](#), whether it is surprising etc.

Further reading: Koev (2018).

Auditive/auditory evidential:

This term has three different uses:

- (1) an evidential marker indicating that the speaker has themselves heard the information, for example 'Mum is playing the piano' when you hear her typical way of playing from the other room. No language is known to have a dedicated marker exclusively for this, so in practice we only see definition (2).
- (2) sometimes used for non-visual evidential (i.e. including other non-visual access beyond hearing) – see [non-visual evidential](#).
- (3) term marginally used in Uralic linguistics to refer to either direct hearing or [hearsay](#) information source (Aikhenvald 2018a).

Aural evidential: see [auditive evidential](#) (1).

Authorit(at)ive: based on [reported evidence](#) from a reliable, trusted individual or authority. It is therefore a [direct](#) but non-personal source (Botne 2020: 461). See also [upgraded access](#).

Authority: see [epistemic authority](#).

B

Background: the part of the comment that is outside the [focus](#) domain. In terms of the [Prague School](#), this follows from the Focus-Background articulation. This is typically [given information](#). See also [afterthought](#).

Best possible ground (BPG): the speaker has the best possible [information source](#) to back an assertion, i.e. the strongest evidence. Direct evidence is typically seen as better evidence, but this is not necessary: [reported](#) information from a trusted person can for example also be marked with a BPG marker.

Further reading: Faller (2002).

Brand-new: see [inactive](#).

Broad focus: [focus](#) on a larger constituent than just a noun phrase, on multiple constituents, typically the verb phrase. It can sometimes include the whole sentence, that is, refer to a [thetic](#) sentence. Compare to [narrow focus](#).
→ Synonym of wide focus.

C

Categorical sentence: sentence that is split in a [topic](#) expression and a [comment](#).
Compare to [thetic sentence](#).
Further reading: Sasse (1996, 2006).

Circumstantial inference: see [inference](#). The explicit reference to 'circumstances' is used when the term 'inference' is used more widely to also cover [assumption](#) and/or [speculation](#) to indicate that the inference is based on external sensory evidence (see Anderson 1986).

Closed focus: [focus](#) selecting from a restricted set of [alternatives](#), for example in an alternative question 'Did you have peas or lentils for supper?'. Compare to [open focus](#).

Collective verification: term used by Kingston (1976) for [general knowledge](#) evidential
– see there.
→ Antonym of individual verification.

Comment: the complement of [topic](#). Provides the information that the speaker wants to add to the addressee's knowledge (and thus to the [common ground](#)). For example, if we've been talking about Imran and wondering what he's been up to, in the sentence 'Imran/he went to the zoo', the underlined comment adds information about the topic Imran.

Commitment: the responsibility a speaker takes for the truth of an utterance. "The normal conditions on assertion will suffice in any neutral context to indicate the speaker's commitment to the propositions she advances" (Matthewson & Glougie 2018: 174). Languages have ways to mitigate commitment, for example hedges such as 'maybe'. Some [indirect evidentials](#) indirect evidentials are associated with reduced, neutral or transferred commitment. Sometimes conflated with [responsibility](#). Not to be confused with [epistemic responsibility](#).
Further reading: Cornillie (2018).

Common Ground: the information that is mutually shared by the speech participants and is believed to be mutually shared, including known referents and the set of utterances that are considered as true by the speech participants (Grzech 2020b: 31). By uttering a statement, a speaker proposes that the information in the statement be added to the common ground; when the addressee does not object, the information becomes part of the common ground.
Further reading: Geurts (2024).

Common Ground Management Operator: an operator which indicates the status of a proposition relative to the [common ground](#). This can be in terms of being already in the common ground or new, how the proposition fits into the speech participants' expectation, and whether a speaker thinks the proposition should be added to or removed from the common ground (Repp 2013).

Compleitive focus: the [focus](#) that fills a gap in the addressee's knowledge by completing a certain proposition in an answer to a content question: 'What did they read? They read [a fairy tale]'. See also [assertive focus](#) and [new information focus](#).

Complex epistemic perspective:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) the situation in which the [epistemic perspectives](#) of both speech participants are considered, representing the perspective of the addressee within the epistemic assessment of the speaker. Later referred to as [engagement](#) – see there.
- (2) the situation in which two epistemic perspectives are layered, typically in reporting situations, where the first perspective is someone other than the speaker, and the second is the speaker. For example, an event might be directly seen by people who then told the speaker: the reported event is coded as visual evidence, and the speaker indicates that they only heard about it as reportative. Further reading: Bergqvist & Knuchel (2017), Evans et al. (2018ab).

Confirmative evidential: term used in Balkan linguistics for [eyewitness evidential](#) - see there.

Congruent: older term for [egophoric](#) – see there.

Conjectural evidential: alternative term used for both [inferred evidential](#) and [assumed evidential](#) (for example in Cole 1982: 164).

Conjecture: term used for [inference](#) and/or [assumption](#)- see there.

Conjunct: older term for [egophoric](#) – see there. See Tournadre (2008) for critique of this term.

Constative:

This term has four different uses:

- (1) French term *constatif*, translated as [testimonial](#) by Tournadre, alternatively called [direct perception](#) or [sensorial](#) - see [sensory evidential](#).
- (2) alternative (and typically avoided) term for [factual](#) in Tibetic linguistics.
- (3) speech act conveying information, which can be attributed a true or false value, as opposed to performative speech acts (Austin 1962).
- (4) using a modal for facts that are newly presented to the addressee (constative modalisation, Larreya 2015)

Contra-expectual: see [counterexpectation](#).

Contrast: a comparison between two [referents](#) or states of affairs, most clearly when both are mentioned explicitly. If seen as a separate notion, it can combine with both [topic](#) and [focus](#).

Further reading: Repp (2010)

Contrastive focus

This term has two different uses:

- (1) [focus](#) in a context where alternatives are explicitly mentioned, for example 'They ate *pancakes*, not broccoli'.
- (2) focus that contrasts the focused referent with [alternatives](#) for which the proposition is not true. This is often mentioned as a pair with [new information focus](#) and is captured here under [exclusive](#) or [exhaustive](#) focus.

Contrastive topic: a [topic](#) that is contrasted with another topic, for example, 'The books he read, but the magazines he threw away'.

Further reading: Büring (2016).

Corrective focus: type of [focus](#) in which the focused element replaces an element of an utterance that is salient in discourse. The interpretational aspect of correcting is typically pragmatic; the semantics of replacing and therefore excluding the incorrect alternative are captured as [exclusive focus](#). Corrective focus can apply to nouns, verbs or even to sublexical entities/functional morphemes, for example in [TAM focus](#), or with a metalinguistic function, referring to properties of expressions and not the propositional content, as in 'I do not live in BERlin, I live in BerLIN'.
→ Synonym of replacive focus.

Counter-assertive focus: type of [focus](#) in which the speaker substitutes information asserted by another speech participant in a previous utterance (Watters 1979). This could also concern [verum](#). Counter-assertive focus relates to previously asserted content, while [corrective focus](#) can be said to also include metalinguistic correction.

Counterexpectation: when a previous expectation of a speaker is not matched in reality. This can be seen as an interpretational aspect of [mirativity](#) (Aikhenvald 2012) – it differs from [unexpectedness](#), which does not involve any prior expectation.

→ Synonym of contra-expectual, misexpectation.

Further reading: Mexas (2016)

Customary evidential: term used by Kroeker (2001) for [general knowledge](#) evidential – see there.

D

Deduction: the process of reaching a conclusion by reasoning about the known facts, specifically the [inference](#) of particular instances based on general premises, for

example 'She is one month old, and one-month-old babies cannot speak, so she cannot speak'. Compare to [induction](#).

Definite: when the speaker assumes the referent of a noun phrase is identifiable by the addressee in the given context. See also [indefinite](#).

Deferred realisation: when the speaker did not notice something while it was happening and only realised later. See also [realisation](#).
Further reading: De Reuse (2003), Maslova (2003).

Degree of certainty: the degree to which a speaker is sure of the truth of the assertion - see [epistemic modality](#). Although it is not necessarily the case, there can be a link with the evidence one has: The degree of certainty is typically highest for our own actions ([participatory](#)), very high for [visual evidence](#), but lower for [assumption](#) and [hearsay](#) from an untrusted source.
Further reading: Boye (2012), Nuyts (2016), Melac (2024).

Degree of informativity: term proposed by Brugman & Macaulay (2015) for the conceptual domain of [mirativity](#) – see there.

Depreciation: a belittling view of someone or something. Relevant here as an [implicature](#) in topic doubling constructions, for example: 'Eating we did (but it was not enough to fill us)'.

Direct evidence: the [information source](#) in which the speaker has personally attested the content of the utterance, be it visually or via other senses. See also [visual evidential](#), [sensory evidential](#) and indirect evidence.

Direct evidential: an [evidential](#) marker supported by a [direct evidence](#) – see there.
Compare with [sensory evidential](#), [indirect evidential](#). In their expression, languages may sometimes use a direct evidential also for information from reliable indirect sources.
→ Synonym of firsthand evidential and sensory evidential under reading (1) of [sensory evidence](#).

Direct perception: as perceived by one's own senses, including [interoception](#); see [sensory evidential](#).

Direct speech: verbatim quotation of something said (Aikhenvald 2018a). See also [quotative](#). Compare with [indirect speech](#).

Discourse status (of a [referent](#)): the relation of a referent to the discourse. In the simplest version, whether the referent is given or new; in a more detailed view, discourse status may refer to the degrees of accessibility of the referent. See [accessibility](#).

Disjunct: old term for [non-egophoric](#) – see there. See Tournadre (2008) for critique of this term.

Dubitative: a linguistic strategy expressing doubt or hesitation.

E

Egophoric: a marker or linguistic strategy indicating that the primary knower has personal knowledge, embodied experience of, privileged [access](#) to or [epistemic primacy](#) over the event. This will typically be the speaker in a first person singular declarative and the addressee for an interrogative, known as the [egophoric distribution](#). See also [egophoricity](#).

→ Synonym of assertor, congruent, conjunct, internal evidence, locutor, personal

→ Antonym of non-egophoric.

Further reading: San Roque et al. (2018), Floyd et al. (2018).

Egophoric distribution: the distribution triggered by the sensitivity of [egophoric](#) markers to person: egophoric markers are associated with first person in declarative clauses and with second person in interrogative clauses, and vice versa for [non-egophoric](#) markers (Tournadre 2008; San Roque et al. 2018). Third person singular is usually marked with the non-egophoric counterpart. The distribution is summarised in the table below. See also [interrogative flip](#) and [anticipation rule](#).

	declarative	interrogative
1	ego	non-ego
2	non-ego	ego
3	non-ego	non-ego

Egophoric evidential: a [direct evidential](#) encoding that the speaker knows something because of involvement in the event and not (necessarily) because of [visual](#) or [sensory](#) evidence. See also [egophoric](#).

→ Synonym of participatory evidential, performative evidential, personal evidential.

Further reading: Garrett (2001: 115), Plungian (2010: 34), Gawne (2017).

Egophoricity: the grammatical encoding of personal knowledge, experience or involvement of a conscious self; also extended to refer to privileged [access](#) of a speech participant to a state or an activity (real or projected) (Floyd et al. 2018). [Egophoric](#) systems are typically characterised by the [egophoric distribution](#).

Further reading: San Roque et al. (2018), Floyd et al. (2018), Tournadre (1992).

Endopathic: see [interoception](#).

Endophoric:

This term has two different uses:

(1) see [interoception](#).

- (2) (of demonstratives) referring to something in the text or discourse, as opposed to exophoric deixis/reference, which refers to something in the real world.

Enimitive: marker of an uncontroversial statement (after the Latin *enim* ‘namely, indeed, in fact’) (Panov 2020).

Engagement: the encoding of [shared](#)/non-shared [access](#) in terms of knowledge, expectation or attention to a discourse object on the part of the speech participants (Knuchel 2020: 448). The speaker takes into account the addressee’s attention or knowledge about something, indicating whether that knowledge is shared or exclusive to speaker or addressee. See also [epistemic access](#), [epistemic perspective](#) and [epistemic stance](#).

→ Synonym of complex epistemic perspective.

Further reading: Bergqvist & Kittilä (2020).

Epistememe: term in Australian linguistics for the class of pronouns used in interrogative function and in statements indicating a lack of knowledge, for example in Diyari ‘What hit me?’ and ‘Something hit me’ are the same (Mushin 1995; Durie 1985).

→ Synonym of ignorative, epistemological classifier.

Epistemic:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) broad sense: related to knowledge (access, authority, stance, perspective, status, (a)symmetry, etc.).
- (2) narrow sense: encoding [epistemic modality](#) (i.e. the speaker’s degree of certainty).

Epistemic access:

This term has two slightly different uses:

- (1) whether speech participants (can) know certain information – see [epistemic status](#). Used under this definition in [engagement](#). Often used relatively between speech participants, for which see [epistemic primacy](#).
- (2) how speech participants obtain information, for example through direct evidence or hearsay – see [evidentiality](#).

Epistemic authority:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) Used as synonym of [epistemic status](#) – see there.
- (2) Used as synonym of [epistemic primacy](#) (e.g. Grzech 2016) – see there.
- (3) Sometimes used as [epistemic origo](#) (Hargreaves 2005; Bruil 2014) – see there.

Epistemic equality: see [symmetry](#).

Epistemic justification: the justification for the speaker’s knowledge or belief in the evidence the speaker has. Also used as alternative definition of [evidentiality](#) (Boye 2012), with divisions of [direct](#) and [indirect](#) justification, the latter subdivided into

[inferential](#) and [reportive](#). Compare to [mode of access](#) and [information source](#).
Further reading: Boye (2012).

Epistemic modality: the linguistic coding of the degree of certainty a speaker has for a proposition. It provides [epistemic support](#) for the uttered content. It reflects the speaker's assessments of the truth of a statement and their subjective evaluation of the degree of certainty (probability, possibility) and has also been described in terms of the speaker's [commitment](#) or confidence. This is logically independent of [evidentiality](#), as the speaker's information source need not be specified: only the [degree of certainty](#) is indicated.

Further reading: Nuyts (2001), Boye (2012, 2014).

Epistemic origo: the holder of the [knowledge](#) (the speaker in statements, the addressee in questions, and the original speaker in reported speech); in parallel with the deictic origo. Sometimes referred to as [epistemic authority](#). See also [epistemic primacy](#), [primary knower](#) and [secondary knower](#).

→ Synonym of seat of knowledge, assertor.

Further reading: Bodnaruk (2025: sec. 7.4.2)

Epistemic perspective: the knowledge base from which information is posited or evaluated. This can be the speaker's perspective, that of the addressee or a non-participant. See also [complex epistemic perspective](#) and [engagement](#), where different perspectives are emphasised in the grammar.

→ Synonym of viewpoint, point of view.

Further reading: Bergqvist (2016).

Epistemic primacy: the right of a speaker to assert something relative to the distribution of information across the speech participants (Grzech 2020a). It is not gradable, differently from [epistemic status](#): either you have it or you don't. It implicates an [asymmetry](#) of knowledge between speech participants in depth, specificity or complexity, i.e. the speaker knows more than the addressee or vice versa. In declaratives, the speaker typically has epistemic primacy, and in questions the addressee – see also [egophoric distribution](#).

→ Synonym of epistemic authority (2).

Further reading: Grzech (2020a)

Epistemic responsibility: a responsibility related to the information that a speaker has the obligation to know, e.g. their name or other personal information (Grzech 2020a: 28).

Epistemic source: see [epistemic origo](#).

Epistemic support: the support a speaker has for an utterance, typically indicated by expressions of epistemic modality (Boye 2012). Epistemic support can be full (certainty), partial (probability) or neutral (lacking epistemic qualification), forming a gradable strength-of-support scale. Together with [epistemic justification](#), it forms the [justificatory support](#) that defines [epistemicity](#) in Boye's definition.

Further reading: Boye (2012).

Epistemic status: the gradable and non-relative [authority](#) over information held by speech participants. It is gradable because different speakers can have different degrees of knowledge on a given matter. It is non-relative because it does not depend on the epistemic status of another speech participant, differently from [epistemic primacy](#). Used by Heritage (2012) as opposed to [epistemic stance](#).

→ Synonym of epistemic authority (1).

Further reading: Bergqvist & Kittilä (2020), Bergqvist & Grzech (2023), Bergqvist & Knuchel (2019), Grzech (2020a).

Epistemic stance: how speech participants position themselves in terms of [epistemic status](#) throughout a conversation. See also [epistemic primacy](#).

Further reading: Heritage (2012), Zuczkowski et al. (2014).

Epistemic vigilance: being careful in accepting the truth of an utterance.

Further reading: Sperber et al. (2010).

Epistemicity: the notional domain of knowledge management, including [knowledge representation](#) and [knowledge attribution](#) in discourse (Grzech & Bergqvist in press). More concretely, the linguistic expression of the speech participants' attention, knowledge, and expectation in relation to the utterance content. Also used more narrowly to refer to the combined area of [evidentiality](#) and [epistemic modality](#) (Boye 2012; there referred to as [justificatory support](#)). Compare with [epistemology](#) or [epistemics](#).

Further reading: Grzech and Bergqvist (in press)

Epistemics: the scientific study of knowledge, a field of cognitive science. Sometimes used as synonym of [epistemology](#); compare with [epistemicity](#).

Epistemological classifier: see [epistememe](#).

Epistemology: the philosophical study of knowledge. Compare with [epistemicity](#) and [epistemics](#).

Further reading: Steup & Neta (2024).

Evidence type: whether the evidence is [visual](#), [sensory](#), [reported](#), etc. as one of three dimensions of [evidential](#) meaning together with [evidence location](#) and [evidence strength](#) (Matthewson 2020: 83).

Evidence location: whether the speaker witnessed the event itself or merely some of its results as one of three dimensions of [evidential](#) meaning together with [evidence type](#) and [evidence strength](#) (Matthewson 2020: 83). See also [direct](#) and [indirect](#) evidence and [inference](#).

Evidence strength: the [trustworthiness/reliability](#) of the evidence as one of three dimensions of [evidential](#) meaning together with [evidence type](#) and [evidence](#)

[location](#) (Matthewson 2020: 83). Crosslinguistically, direct evidence tends to be seen as stronger than indirect, visual evidence as stronger than non-visual, and inference as stronger than assumption (Aikhenvald 2004). See also [epistemic modality](#).

Evidential: a marker of [evidentiality](#) – see there. Some use the term to refer only to dedicated grammatical markers of evidentiality (Aikhenvald 2018a), whereas others use the term more broadly to also include other linguistic strategies that may not be solely used for evidentiality.

→ Sometimes used as synonym of [mediative](#), see [mediativity](#) (2).

Evidential extension: an [evidential](#) aspect of meaning being expressed by a linguistic expression that is not evidential at its core - see also [evidential strategy](#).

Evidential strategy: a linguistic expression that is not [evidential](#) at its core, but which is used to convey evidential aspects of meaning. For example, the French conditional conjugation is said to not have indirect evidence as its core meaning, but in *Six appareils argentins auraient été abattus* ‘Six Argentinian aircrafts were reportedly shot down’ it does attribute the information to a third party (Dendale & Tasmowski 2001; Dendale 1993; Melac & Bres 2025).

Evidentiality: the linguistic coding of the [information source](#) for an utterance (Aikhenvald 2004). Alternatively defined as the grammatical encoding of [mode of access](#) to information (Tournadre & LaPolla 2014). Different subdivisions are given in [Table 1](#) at the end of this document. While some keep a narrower definition as only applying to *grammatical* expression, others take the term to apply more broadly to the semantic/pragmatic meaning without reference to its expression.

→ Sometimes seen as synonym of mediativity.

Further reading: Aikhenvald (2004, 2018)

Exclamative: a clause type or other formal marking used to intensify the content of the utterance (the exclamation), typically expressing the speaker’s emotion, e.g. ‘What a lovely idea!’.

Further reading: Rett (2011), Trotzke & Giannakidou (2024).

Exclusive focus, exclusivity: indicates that for some of the [alternatives](#) to the [focused](#) constituent, the proposition is not true. For example, saying ‘They ate SAMOSAS’ with a strong pitch accent on the object suggest that they did not eat alternatives such as beans or bananas (though they may still have eaten other things). Compare [exhaustive focus](#).

Exhaustive focus, exhaustivity: indicates that for all of the [alternatives](#) to the [focused](#) constituent, the proposition is not true. For example, saying ‘They are only samosas’ indicates that they ate nothing else, i.e. it excludes all alternatives (‘only’ is an exhaustive focus-sensitive particle). Compare [exclusive focus](#) and [expanding focus](#).

Further reading: Zimmermann & Onea (2011).

Existential sentence: presenting the existence of a referent as one piece of information to the addressee, for example 'There are cats in the kitchen'.
Subcategory of [theticity](#).
Further reading: Sasse (1996, 2006).

Expanding focus: when the focused referent extends the set of referents mentioned in a previous (incomplete) statement for which the proposition is true. If the previous statement had an [exhaustive](#) aspect of meaning, the extension corrects this exhaustivity, for example 'Did you buy beans?' 'Yes, and/but I also bought rice'.
Compare also to [exclusive focus](#) and [corrective focus](#).

Expectational/expectative evidential: see [assumed evidential](#).

Experiential evidential:

This term has two quite different uses:

- (1) see [sensory evidential](#).
- (2) see [assumed evidential](#).

External evidence: see [non-egophoric](#).

Antonym: [internal/experiential evidence](#) (see [egophoric](#)).

Exteroception: observation of stimuli from outside the body, through sight, sound, touch, smell, taste.
→ Antonym of [interoception](#).

Eyewitness evidential:

- 1. notionally the same as a [visual evidential](#), but usually found in an [evidentiality](#) system with a two-way distinction.
→ Synonym of confirmative evidential, visual evidential.
- 2. [direct evidential](#) if [non-visual direct evidence](#) is included, e.g. in systems with an eyewitness/non-eyewitness distinction.
→ Antonym of [non-eyewitness evidential](#).

F

Factual: term used in Tibetic linguistics indicating something known or presented as a fact (Aikhenvald 2018b). Also called assertive, statemental.
Further reading: Zeisler (2024).

Familiar(ity) topic, F-topic: a [topic](#) that is highly [active](#) and has already been the topic in a previous sentence. Sometimes distinguished from [contrastive topic](#) and [aboutness topic](#).

Firsthand evidential: see [direct evidential](#).

Focus: a function that triggers a set of (contextually relevant) [alternatives](#) (Rooth 1985, 1996). Alternative definitions refer to the relative newness of the focused

information, e.g. Lambrecht (1994: 213) defines focus as "the semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the proposition".

Further reading: Krifka & Musan (2012), Matic' (2015).

Frame-setting topic: see [scene-setting topic](#).

Frustrative: a grammatical marker that expresses the nonrealization of some expected outcome implied by the proposition expressed in the marked clause (Overall 2017), for example 'It got brighter-FRUST but he still couldn't see it' (Davis & Matthewson 2022).

G

General knowledge: general, cultural, or historical knowledge; accepted facts (Keinänen 2021; Kittilä 2019). General knowledge is any piece of information that has become a part of the speaker's world view and for which they have subjective certainty (which does not have to correspond to objective facts in the non-linguistic world). External evidence is not needed for general knowledge.

Generic:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) statement making a generalisation, e.g. 'Ravens are black'.
Further reading: Cohen (2022).
- (2) see [assumption](#). 'Generic inference' (based on world knowledge) is used by Aikhenvald (2003) as complementary to 'specific inference' (based on results) - the former we refer to as assumption and the latter as [inference](#).

Given information: information that is [active](#) in the conversation, part of the [common ground](#). See [new vs. old/given](#).

Gustatory: referring to the sense of taste. So far, no example is known of gustatory evidence being expressed by a dedicated marker.

H

Hearsay: second-hand evidence/information whose source is not specified, as in 'They say that Alex will move to Innsbruck next month'. The term is also used in a broader sense as [reported evidence](#) (in binary evidential systems, Aikhenvald 2004) – see there.

Heterophoric: other term for [non-egophoric](#) (used in Tournadre 1991) – see there.

Hybrid reported speech: a type of reported speech in which pronouns, deictics and register (honorific, humilific, etc.) are shifted, but not the inflections (egophorics, evidentials, etc.) of the original citation. See also [shifted evidential/egophoric](#), [perspective shift](#), [logophoricity](#).
Further reading: Tournadre (2008).

Hyperprobabilitative: expressing that the information is very likely to be true (used by Salminen 1997 for Tundra Nenets reportative, as referred to by (Nikolaeva 2014)).

Hot news: type of [thetic sentence](#) in a context without relevant presuppositions, when someone announces something they just learned. See also [out of the blue](#).

Identificational focus: [focus](#) that identifies a [referent](#) in an existential presupposition. For example in 'What I like is sunshine', where the presupposition is that there is something that I like and this something is identified as sunshine. Some authors (for example É. Kiss 1998) use the concept of identificational focus as a hypernym of [contrastive focus](#).

|

Ignorative:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) strategy used in interrogatives to indicate that the speaker has no idea about the answer.
- (2) term covering both interrogative and indefinite use of pronouns (Wierzbicka 1980)
→ Synonym of [epistememe](#).

Immediate knowledge:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) An unmediated [knowledge](#), i.e. not coming from [inference](#) or [direct evidence](#) but rather immediately available to the speaker, for example through involvement in an event or internal experience (emotion, intention, physical sensation – see [interoception](#)). The knowledge underpinning an [egophoric evidential](#).
→ Synonym of self knowledge.
Further reading: Garrett's (2001) chapter 4.
- (2) knowledge immediately acquired in the present situation (what the speaker has just perceived or learnt) – related to mirativity.
Further reading: Peterson (2017).

Impersonal:

This term has two different uses, which have nothing to do with impersonal constructions:

- (1) other term used for [non-egophoric](#) – see there.
- (2) [reported](#) evidence (as counterpart to [personal](#), used by Plungian 2010); see [Table 1](#). In this use similar to [interpersonal](#) (2)

Implicature: something that the speaker suggests without mentioning it explicitly.

Inactive: not active in the mind of the speech participants. This is the lowest level of [activation](#). Compare with [semi-active](#), [accessibility](#), [new vs old](#) and [unused](#).

→ Synonym of brand-new.

Further reading: Chafe (1976)

Indefinite: when the referent of a noun phrase is introduced in discourse and the speaker assumes it is not identifiable by the addressee. See also [definite](#).

Indirect speech: non-verbatim [reported evidence](#) of what was said by someone else, with adapted deictic categories (Aikhenvald 2018b). For example, ‘She said that *she arrived*’ (which in direct speech would be ‘She said: “I arrived”’, with a 1st person pronoun). See also [direct speech](#), [logophoric](#), [quotative](#), [reported evidence](#).

Indirect evidence: any [information source](#) that does not derive from sight or other senses (i.e. not from [direct evidence](#)). In our glossary this includes [inference](#), [assumption](#), [reported evidence](#), [hearsay](#), [quotation](#).
→ Antonym of [direct evidence](#), [latentive](#).

Indirect evidential: an [evidential](#) marker signaling [indirect evidence](#).
→ Synonym of non-firsthand evidential.
→ Antonym of [direct evidential](#), [latentive](#).

Indirective evidential: Term used in Turkish linguistics to refer to a [non-eyewitness evidential](#) or [non-firsthand evidential/indirect evidential](#) (Aikhenvald 2018b) – see there.

Induction: the process of discovering a general principle from a set of facts (Cambridge English Dictionary), for example ‘Every time I eat dairy, I feel sick. So, I may be lactose intolerant’. Compare to [deduction](#).

Inference:

- (1) broad definition: information source based on reasoning from any type of premise leading to a conclusion (as opposed to direct perception or report/hearsay)
- (2) narrow definition: [information source](#) based on reasoning from something the speaker perceives or has perceived, i.e. evidence logically obtained from something attested. For example, if I see grandma’s coat in our house, I can infer ‘Grandma must be visiting’. Different from, although sometimes confused with, [assumption](#) and [speculation](#) - compare there.
Further reading on the interplay between inference and assumption: Kittilä (2024)

Inferential: an [evidential](#) marker supported by [inference](#) – see there.
→ Synonym of apparent, conjectural evidential, inferred evidential.

Inferred evidential: see [inferential](#).

Information:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) facts provided or learned about something or someone.

(2) what is conveyed or represented by a particular sequence of symbols, impulses, etc. (OED).

Compare to [knowledge](#), which is information as held by a speech participant.

Information packaging: see [information structure](#).

Information source: according to many it is the concept at the base of [evidentiality](#).

There are two slightly different interpretations:

(1) the way in which a speaker or participant has learnt the information (Aikhenvald 2004), for example by hearsay or through seeing the event oneself.

(2) the real-world source to which speakers have a [mode of access](#), which according to some is in turn what is marked through [evidentiality](#). Under this interpretation, the information source would be the specific person or text or medium who tells you, or the event itself.

Tournadre and Lapolla (2014) propose that evidentiality consists of information access (e.g. sensory, inferential, egophoric) as well as information source (either the speaker or a reported source). These two notions are typically encoded in different paradigms in the Tibetic languages.

Information structure: the way in which speakers shape their sentences in order to signal to the addressee how parts of the utterance fit in the discourse. This typically includes marking given versus [new](#) information, and highlighting [contrastive](#) information. Core functions in information structure include [topic](#) and [focus](#).

→ Synonym of information packaging.

Further reading: Krifka & Musan (2012).

Interlocutor: participant in a conversation, i.e. the speaker and the addressee.

Internal evidence/experience: see [egophoric](#).

Interoception: observation within oneself, of sensations (e.g. hunger, pain, temperature) and emotions.

→ Synonym of endopathic, endophoric.

→ Antonym of [exteroception](#).

Interpersonal:

This term has two different uses:

(1) concerning interactions involving multiple people and their way of communicating (e.g. in Basso 2020).

(2) according to some, one of the two types in a first level of split within categories of [evidentiality](#) in which the perspective of someone else is presented (it subsumes [reportative evidential](#) – see there). See also ([Table 1](#)).

→ Antonym of [representational](#).

Interrogative flip: the tendency for e.g. evidentials to be about the hearer's knowledge in interrogatives, rather than the speaker's (Matthewson et al. 2007). See also [assessor shift](#), [anticipation rule](#) and [egophoric distribution](#).

Further reading: San Roque et al. (2017a).

Intersubjective, intersubjectivity: the way in which natural language expresses (the speaker's 'awareness of) the addressee's knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs and/or coordinates the relation between speaker and addressee. See also [subjective](#) and [knowledge attribution](#).

→ Antonym of [objective](#).

Further reading: Traugott (2003, 2010), Verhagen (2005), Evans et al. (2018a).

J

Justificatory support: support given to an utterance by [epistemic modality](#) or [evidentiality](#). Boye (2012) proposes justificatory support as a generalisation over [epistemic support](#) and [epistemic justification](#) – see there.

Further reading: Boye (2012).

K

Knowledge (in epistemicity): [information](#) acquired through experience or education; all the information a speech participant holds.

Knowledge attribution: in the context of discursive interaction, knowledge is not equally available to every participant: it resides in the speakers' own minds and it needs to be negotiated throughout the exchange. In this sense, participants can attribute knowledge to themselves (the speaker) to their interlocutor or to third non-participants. According to Grzech & Bergqvist (in press), understanding and studying these negotiations and attribution is crucial for our understanding of [epistemicity](#).

Knowledge representation: strategies employed by language users to (i) (dis)claim knowledge, and (ii) display attitudes towards it (Grzech & Bergqvist in press).

L

Latentive: term used in Uralic linguistics for [non-firsthand evidential](#) (Aikhenvald 2018) – see there.

Locutor: see [egophoric](#).

Locutor subject: term used for an [egophoric](#) marker which also encodes more agentivity (Curnow 1997 on Awá Pit) – see also [egophoric](#).

Locutor undergoer: term used for an [egophoric](#) marker indicating that the EGO is not an agent, for example for (Curnow 1997 on Awá Pit). See also [egophoric](#).

Logical inference: term in Tibetan linguistics for [assumption](#) – see there; opposed to sensory inference (= [inference](#)).

Logophoric: pronouns or markers employed in [indirect speech](#) to refer to the person whose speech is being reported, for example if a language has two forms for ‘they’ in ‘My parents said that they_{LOG} (themselves)/ they_{PRO} (other people) went out’. Logophoric pronouns indicate whether the subject of the reported utterance is the same as the speaker or another argument, or not. They are a source for [evidential](#) markers (Aikhenvald 2018b), see also [egophoricity](#).
Further reading: Ameka (2017).

Logophoricity: the phenomenon associated with [logophoric](#) markers – see there.

Loose egophoric: see [weak egophoric](#).

M

Manifestness (of an assumption to an individual): the degree to which an individual is capable of mentally representing a thought or belief and holding it as true or probably true at a given moment (Carston 2002: 378, see also Sperber & Wilson 1995). The term is used in Relevance Theory in explaining that communication is not dependent on mutual *knowledge*, but [mutual manifestness](#) (see there).

Mediative: a marker of [mediativity](#), sometimes restricted to [indirect evidential](#).
Further reading: Lazard (1999)

Mediativity:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) a category encompassing the functions of [mirativity](#), [reported evidence](#) and [inference](#) (Guentchéva 1994; Lazard 1999). In this view, these three notions would all be connected to the need of the speaker to distance themselves from the content of their utterance (to add *mediation*).
- (2) term used in francophone linguistics for [evidentiality](#) (Aikhenvald 2004) – see there.

Memory deixis (Fraser & Joly 1980): see [recognitional deixis](#).

Metarepresentation: a representation in someone’s mind of a representation in the same or someone else’s mind, for example in embedding (‘Jerry thinks that Ali is getting coffee’) and in discovering the other speech participant’s intentions in communication (‘By saying p, the speaker intends the addressee to know p and to deduce that the speaker intends them to know p’). (term used in Relevance Theory)
Further reading: Carston (2002), Allott (2017).

Mirative: a linguistic strategy expressing [mirativity](#) – see there. Some keep a narrower definition as only applying to grammatical strategies, while others take the term to apply more broadly to the semantic/pragmatic meaning without reference to its expression.

Mirativity: the grammatical marking of an “[unprepared mind](#)”, including [unexpectedness](#), [realisation](#), [counterexpectation](#), [new information](#) and surprise

(Aikhenvald 2012; Aikhenvald 2018). This can be surprise for the speaker, the addressee, or a character in a narrative.
Further reading: Aikhenvald (2012)

Misexpectation: see [counterexpectation](#).

Mode of access: the way in which a speaker has acquired the information in an utterance. Some support the idea that [evidentiality](#) encodes mode of access, rather than [information source](#). This definition opposed to information source stresses that it is not the source itself that is grammatically encoded but the way in which the [information](#) was acquired (Tournadre & LaPolla 2014; Bruil 2015) – compare with [information source](#). See also [evidentiality](#), [epistemic justification](#).

Mutual manifestness: information is mutually manifest to two individuals if (i) they are both capable of accessing this information through memory, perception or inference, and (ii) they are both aware of this mutual access (Sperber & Wilson 1995). See also [shared knowledge](#), shared access under [engagement](#) and see also [common ground](#).

N

Narrow focus: [focus](#) on a smaller constituent, and only a single constituent, often equal to [term focus](#), but also used for focus narrowly on the verb or an [operator focus](#). Compare to [broad focus](#).

Narrow scope egophoric: see [strong egophoric](#).

New vs. old/given: whether a [referent](#) (narrow sense – see also [narrow focus](#)) or a larger informational unit (broad sense – see also [broad focus](#)) is part of the [common ground](#). A binary distinction (new/old) may be too coarse; see [accessibility](#).

New information focus: a [focus](#) constituent presenting new information without further aspects of meaning (such as contrast); typically the answer to a content question. See also [assertive focus](#) and [completive focus](#).

Non-confirmative: term used in Balkan linguistics for [non-eyewitness evidential](#) – see there.

Non-congruent: older term for [non-egophoric](#) – see there.

Non-direct evidence: see [indirect evidence](#).

Non-egophoric: indicating that the [primary knower](#) has no personal involvement in the event, a lack of privileged access or epistemic primacy (but another person does). Counterpart of [egophoric](#). See also [egophoric distribution](#).
→ Synonym of allophoric, alterphoric, disjunct, external evidence, heterophoric, impersonal, non-congruent, non-locutor.

Non-eyewitness evidential: an [evidential](#) marker signaling that the information was not acquired through sight by the speaker.

→ Antonym of [eyewitness evidential](#).

Non-firsthand evidential: see [indirect evidential](#).

→ Antonym of [firsthand evidential](#).

Non-locutor: see [non-egophoric](#).

Non-visual (direct) evidence: an [information source](#) based on hearing, smelling, feeling and possibly taste, usually extending to inner sensations, feelings and thoughts. These are typically not further subdivided for separate marking. Often complementary to [visual evidence](#) and similar to [sensory evidence](#). Different from [indirect evidence](#) – compare there.

Further reading: Aikhenvald (2018)

Non-visual (direct) evidential: an [evidential](#) marker signaling [non-visual \(direct\) evidence](#), i.e. that the information is based on hearing, smelling, feeling and possibly taste, usually extending to inner sensations, feelings and thoughts. Often complementary to [visual evidential](#) markers and similar to [sensory evidential](#) (2) – compare there.

Non-witnessed evidential: see [non-eyewitness evidential](#).

O

Objective:

This term has two quite different uses:

- (1) term for [non-egophoric](#) marking – see there.
- (2) relating to (a model of) the actual world, without influence of a speech participant's assessment or construal of the situation.

→ Antonym of [subjective](#) and [intersubjective](#).

Oblique: see [non-direct evidence](#).

Old knowledge: a piece of information that has fully been integrated into the speaker's overall scheme of knowledge of the world (DeLancey 1986; Garrett 2001). Different from [new vs. old/given](#) as used in [information structure](#), which concerns the mental [accessibility](#) of a [referent](#) at the time of utterance – for which see also [accessibility](#)).

Olfactory: referring to the sense of smell. No language has a separate marker to express just olfactory evidence (Aikhenvald 2018a).

Open focus: [focus](#) selecting from an unrestricted set of alternatives, for example in an answer to a content question such as 'What did you have for supper?'. Compare to [closed focus](#).

Operator focus: [focus](#) on sentence operators such as tense, aspect, mood, and polarity. Subpart of [predicate-centred focus \(PCF\)](#) together with [TAM focus](#) and [polarity focus](#).

Origo shift: a shift of epistemic perspective and origo, this can for example be from the speaker in a statement to the addressee in a question; see also [egophoric distribution](#) and [interrogative flip](#).
→ Synonym of assessor shift.

Out of the blue: the contextual condition in which no relevant presuppositions are present, for example at the beginning of a conversation or when presenting ‘hot news’. Typical context for [thetic sentences](#).

P

Parallel focus: [focus](#) in two juxtaposed clauses, featuring [contrastive topics](#) as well. For example ‘The troll *passed the giant quietly*, but the fairy *woke him up*’, where the troll and the fairy are contrastive topics, and the predicates are in parallel focus. The interpretational aspect of a parallel or contrast is typically pragmatic.

Participatory evidential: see [egophoric evidential](#).

Performative evidential: see [egophoric evidential](#).

Permanently available referent: [referent](#) that is generally known and to some extent [accessible](#), such as ‘the queen’ and ‘the sun’. These can easily become a [topic](#) without having been explicitly introduced into the discourse.

Personal

This term has two different uses:

- (1) term used in Tibetan linguistics for [egophoric](#) – see there and see [egophoric evidential](#).
- (2) in Plungian’s (2010) categorisation of [evidentiality](#), all but reported types of evidence, i.e. direct evidence as well as [inference](#) and [assumption](#) (as defined in this glossary); see [Table 1](#). In this case, it is antonym of [impersonal](#) (2) – see there.

Perspective shift: shifting from the speaker’s perspective to someone else’s. While typically the content of the utterance is attributed to the speaker of the utterance, this can be shifted to someone else, as may happen in reported speech and reportatives. For example ‘[Sinan arrived-REPORTATIVE] [but I don’t believe it]’, where only the second clause gives the speaker’s perspective. See also [hybrid reported speech](#).

Further reading: AnderBois (2015).

Point of view (within [epistemicity](#)): see [epistemic perspective](#).

Polarity focus: [focus](#) on the affirmation or negation in the clause. Polarity focus is possible in answering a yes/no question, unlike [verum](#).

Possibilitative

This term has two different uses:

- (1) synonym of [potential](#);
- (2) mood indicating uncertainty and possibility of the event to take place.

Potential: verb form indicating

- (1) 'S is able to V' or
 - (2) 'X may occur/X finds the occurrence of Y possible'
- Synonym of possibilitative (1).

Predicate focus: [focus](#) on the verb itself or the verb phrase. Not to be confused with [predicate-centred focus \(PCF\)](#).

Predicate-centred focus (PCF): [focus](#) that is not on a term (argument or adjunct), but on part of the predicate. Subdivided into [State-of-Affairs focus](#), tense/aspect/mood [TAM focus](#), and [polarity focus](#) (Güldemann 2009). Not to be confused with [predicate focus](#).

Presentational focus:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) explicitly introducing a new participant into the discourse, as a [thetic sentence](#);
- (2) presenting a [referent](#) as new information, see [new information focus](#) and [assertive focus](#).

Presumptive evidential: see [assumed evidential](#).

Presupposition:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) tacit assumptions taken for granted by the speaker. For example, 'Do you want to go to the cinema again?' presupposes that the addressee has gone to the cinema previously. See also [identificational focus](#).
- (2) the elements of information in an utterance that the speaker assumes to be shared by the addressee (Watters 1979).

Further reading: Beaver et al. (2024).

Primary epistemic authority: see [epistemic primacy](#). Used in relation to [shared epistemic authority](#). See also [symmetry](#), [asymmetry](#).

Primary knower: the speech participant with [epistemic primacy](#) - see there. See also [secondary knower](#) and [epistemic origo](#).

Privileged access: when only one speech participant has access to certain knowledge. See also [epistemic primacy](#), [egophoricity](#), [engagement](#) and [asymmetry](#).

Prominence: see [salience](#).

Prospective evidential: an [evidential](#) marker signaling that the [information](#) is a future projection, based on [inference](#) or [assumption](#) (Aikhenvald 2018b). Compare with [speculative evidential](#).

Q

Question under discussion (QUD): the (often implicit) question that participants in the discourse are trying to answer. For example, the QUD can be what you did over the weekend, answering by 'We went for a walk', which can be followed by 'and then had a nice cup of tea', which can be seen as answering an implicit QUD 'and what happened then?'. "QUD" can be seen as a framework to understand how sentences in a discourse relate to each other. The basic idea is that speakers are trying to answer to the big QUD "How are things?" and do so by answering smaller questions first (the so-called immediate QUDs) to progressively align the [common ground](#).

Further reading: Roberts (1996), Benz & Jasinskaja (2017).

Quotative:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) A linguistic expression which signals reported speech (Güldemann 2008), sometimes restricted to markers introducing a verbatim quote.
- (2) As part of an evidential system, a linguistic expression indicating that the information is reported and refers to speech by an identifiable person (as opposed to [hearsay](#)). In some North American descriptions, *quotative* is a synonym of the broader notion of [reported evidence](#) – see there.

See also [direct speech](#), [indirect speech](#).

R

Reactivation: the increase in mental [accessibility](#) of a referent when mentioning them again after a period of not doing so.

Realisation: the transition from ignorance to knowledge of a fact. This is one aspect of [mirativity](#).

Further reading: (Mexas 2016; Aikhenvald 2012).

Reasoning evidential: term for [inferred](#) or [assumed evidential](#), indicating that reasoning is used to arrive at a conclusion.

Recognitional deixis, recognitionality: reference (typically by a demonstrative) to a referent that has not been mentioned and cannot be inferred but is assumed to be shared between speaker and addressee, e.g. 'when they go to that cabin of theirs' (Meeuwis & Stroeken 2022). See also [shared knowledge](#).

→ Synonym of memory deixis.

Further reading: Himmelmann (1996), Enfield (2003).

Referent tracking: checking for each [referent](#) in a discourse or narrative when and how it is referred to.

Referent: an entity (person, animal, thing, concept) in the world that is referred to in an utterance.

Reflected evidence: type of [indirect evidence](#) in Plungian's (2001) classification, including [inference](#) and [assumption](#), as opposed to [quotation](#). This type of evidence is based on mental processing and always somehow subjective.

Reliability: the degree of trust that a speaker lends to some information.

Information is considered more reliable

1. with a higher degree of speaker [commitment](#);
2. when the source is shared by more participants than just the speaker;
3. when coming from a trusted source, either in terms of [status](#) (e.g. a doctor's report on health being more reliable than a layman's) or in terms of evidential hierarchy (e.g. [visual evidence](#) being more reliable than [hearsay](#)).

→ Synonym of trustworthiness.

Further reading: Cornillie (2009), Wiemer (2018).

Remind-me particle: particle used in questions, indicating that the information that the speaker asks for was earlier contributed to the [common ground](#), but the speaker does not currently remember this information and expects the addressee to have it. Example: 'What was your name *again*?'. See also [remind-me presupposition](#) and [recognitional deixis](#).

Remind-me presupposition: presupposition that the information solicited in the question had been contributed to the [common ground](#) before, triggered by a [remind-me particle](#) in a question. See also [remind-me particle](#).

Further reading: Sauerland & Watsushiro (2017).

Renarrative: see [reported](#).

Replacive focus: see [corrective focus](#).

Responsibility:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) 'discourse attribute responsibility' is the accountability of speakers to some salient attribute of discourse based on what the speakers utter (e.g. a speaker is responsible for the factuality of utterances, or for their politeness). Similar, in some regards, to the notion of [commitment](#). Not to be confused with [epistemic responsibility](#).

- (2) 'event responsibility' is the accountability of speakers for real world events. Based on this, speakers are held blameworthy or praiseworthy.

Further reading: Michael (2020) on Nanti evidentials and responsibility.

Restrictive focus: when the focused [referent](#) is a subpart of an earlier mentioned (overcomplete) referent, thus being corrected by restricting the truth to just one part. For example, ‘No, it’s not bananas and mangos that she brought – she just brought mangos’. The interpretational aspect of restriction is typically pragmatic; the exclusion of the other referent is captured in the semantics as [exclusivity](#).

Reportative evidential:

This term has two slightly different uses:

- (1) an [evidential](#) marker signaling that the [information source](#) is [reported](#). In this case it includes sources both from known ([quotative](#)) and unknown ([hearsay](#)) sources.
- (2) see [hearsay](#). This use excludes quotative sources.

See also [Table 1](#).

→ Synonym of reportive evidential, secondhand evidential, and sometimes used as a synonym of [quotative](#) evidential.

Reported evidence: [information source](#) indicating that the [information](#) was acquired through someone else’s report. See also [hearsay](#) and [quotative](#).

→ Synonym of [secondhand](#) (according to some, this is a subcategory of reported evidence together with [thirdhand](#) – see [table 1](#)).

Reportive evidential: see [reportative evidential](#).

Representational: according to some, one of the two types in a first level of split within [evidentiality](#) categories in which the [epistemic perspective](#) of the speaker is presented (it comprises, in the definitions of this glossary, [direct evidential](#), [inferred evidential](#) and [assumed evidential](#)). See also [table 1](#).

→ Antonym of [interpersonal](#).

Revelative:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) referring to a dream as the [information source](#) (Aikhenvald 2018, referring to (Jakobson 1957). It is unclear if any language marks this separately (though see (Kracke 2010).
- (2) marking that some hidden information is revealed to the addressee. In this use comparable to aspects of [mirativity](#) (Adelaar 2013), specifically [realisation](#).

Rheme: the information added to the [theme](#); comparable to the [comment](#). Term used by the [Prague School](#).

S

Salience: special importance given to or inherent to referents or states of affairs, for example due to high animacy, perceptual prominence, or mental [accessibility](#).

→ Synonym: prominence.

Scene-setting topic: a type of [topic](#), indicating a description of the circumstances that the following sentence is about, typically adverbial, as in '[Last night], I slept so well'.

Seat of knowledge: the participant “who can evaluate, or process, or comment on the truth of a proposition” (Speas & Tenny 2003: 332). In an unmarked statement, the speaker is the seat of knowledge; in questions this is the addressee. Compare to [epistemic primacy](#).

Secondary knower: the speech participant that does not have [epistemic primacy](#). See also [primary knower](#), [epistemic primacy](#), and [epistemic origo](#).

Secondhand: see [reported evidence](#). According to some, secondhand evidence is a subcategory of reported evidence, if distinguishing between second- and third-hand (Willett 1988); see also [Table 1](#).

Secondhand evidential: see [reportative evidential](#).

Selective focus: when the [focused](#) referent is selected from a given set of alternatives, for example in answer to an alternative question ‘Do you want coffee or tea?’. The interpretational aspect of [selection](#) is typically pragmatic.

Self knowledge:

This term has two different uses:

- (1) Knowledge about oneself, typically (but not always) encoded by [egophoric](#) marking in languages with such markers.

Further reading: Melac, Tournadre & Aikhenvald (2025)

- (2) see [immediate knowledge](#).

Semi-active: halfway the [activation](#) hierarchy, that is, having been mentally activated before but now no longer being highly active. Compare to [inactive](#), [unused](#) and see also [accessibility](#).

Sensorial: see [sensory evidential](#).

Sensory evidence:

This term has two different uses:

1. information source deriving from perception from any physical senses. Compare [direct evidence](#).
2. (more typically) information source deriving from physical senses other than sight, in a system that distinguishes [visual](#) and [non-visual \(direct\) evidence](#) – see there.

Different senses may differ in their reliability, for example when [olfactory](#) evidence is expressed as [inference](#).

Sensory evidential: an [evidential](#) marker signaling that the [information source](#) is [sensory evidence](#).

→ Synonym of constative (1), sensorial, testimonial.

Sensory inference: term in Tibetan linguistics for (narrow) [inference](#) – see there; opposed to logical inference (= [assumption](#)).

Shared epistemic authority: see [symmetry](#) (2).

Shared knowledge: term used in [engagement](#) research to refer to long term knowledge accessible in a speech community or more narrowly between interlocutors. Compare with [common ground \(CG\)](#).

Shift topic: a [topic](#) whose referent is different from the topic [referent](#) of the previous sentence (and therefore less [active](#)).

Shifted evidential/egophoric: [evidential](#) or [egophoric](#) marker used in a context where the basic meaning does not obtain. This can mean a shift in time (e.g. using a present tense ‘witnessed’ evidential when narrating a past event, de Haan 2005: 386), in location, or in epistemic origo (e.g. in embedded sentences, e.g. ‘Tashi_i said he_i is-EGO a teacher’, Garrett 2001: 209). See also [origo shift](#), [perspective shift](#), [hybrid reported speech](#) and [logophoricity](#). Further reading: De Haan (2005), Brugman & Macaulay (2015).

Source of information: see [information source](#).

Speculative evidential: an [evidential](#) marker signaling that the [information source](#) is [speculation](#), i.e. logic deduction, general knowledge or speaker’s experience with the addition of bringing a new idea into the discourse, unlike the [assumed evidential](#). See also [assumed evidential](#), [inferred evidential](#).

Speculation: when the speaker imagines hypothetical possibilities of what may or may not (have) happen(ed). Unlike with [inference](#) and [assumption](#), this does not need to be based in logic deduction – compare there. In contrast to assumption, the speaker cannot propose a ‘best possible scenario’ based on the available evidence for speculation (which can be zero), but all scenarios are viewed as equally probable guesses. For example, if I see grandma’s coat in our house, I can speculate ‘Maybe she made biscuits she wants to share’ – but this option is as likely as ‘maybe she will take us to the cinema’.

Speech act: the performative aspect that utterances have, i.e. the communicative and real world performative function of an utterance, such as a request, warning, promise, apology etc. Further reading: Green (2017).

Stage topic: the ‘here and now’ that the [comment](#) is about in a [thetic](#) sentence, for example in ‘It’s raining’ or ‘The QUEEN had an accident!’. Further reading: Erteschik-Shir (1997; 2007).

Stance: the linguistic mechanisms used by speakers and writers to convey their personal feelings and assessments (Biber 2004: 109). See also [epistemic stance](#). Further reading: Gray & Biber (2012).

State-of-affairs focus: [focus](#) on the lexical value of the verb, for example 'She BAKED the cake, she didn't buy it'. Part of [predicate-centred focus \(PCF\)](#).

Strict egophoric: see [strong egophoric](#).

Strong egophoric: strictly requiring a first-person subject for [egophoric](#) marking, as opposed to looser constructions defined as [weak/assumptive egophoric](#). With weak egophoric markers, the egophoric form can also be used for associated referents, such as the speaker's child – this is not allowed for strong egophoric markers.

See also [egophoric](#), [egophoric distribution](#), [egophoric evidential](#).

→ Antonym of [weak/assumptive egophoric](#).

→ Synonym of narrow scope egophoric, strict egophoric.

Further reading: Garrett (2001)

Subjective:

This term has two different uses:

(1) term for [egophoric](#) marking – see there, and see [Table 2](#).

(2) representing the speaker's attitudes and beliefs – see [subjectivity](#).

→ Antonym of [objective](#).

Subjectivity: the way in which natural languages provide for the speaker's expression of themselves and their own attitudes and beliefs (Lyons 1982: 102) adapted). See also [intersubjective](#), [intersubjectivity](#) and [objective](#).

Further reading: (Verhagen 2005; Traugott 2010; Nuyts 2014a; Nuyts 2014b)

Symmetry (in the context of [epistemicity](#)):

This term has two different uses:

(1) the relative access to some domain of two (or more) people at some point in time (Heritage 2012: 5).

(2) the state of two (or more) people having equal access to [knowledge](#). See also [shared knowledge](#).

→ Synonym of epistemic equality.

→ Antonym of [asymmetry](#).

T

Tactile: referring to the sense of touch. No language has a separate marker to express just tactile evidence (Aikhenvald 2018a).

TAM focus: [focus](#) on the tense, aspect, or mood of the clause, for example in 'The prime minister MAY resign, but she doesn't have to'. Part of [operator focus](#), together with [state-of-affairs focus](#) and [polarity focus](#).

Territory of information/knowledge: the field of [information/knowledge](#) available to speech participants (Kamio 1997). It can be shared, possessed only by the speaker or only by the hearer. Knowing what falls in which of these territories modulates politeness and directness in interactions, for example, something that does not fall in the hearer's territory will be communicated more indirectly (Zuczkowski et al. 2014).

Term focus: [focus](#) on an argument or adjunct, or a subpart of these, for example 'It was the DRAGON who hugged the prince' (subject focus in a cleft) or 'I saw a BLUE dragon, not a red one' (focus on the adjective). Complementary to [predicate-centered focus \(PCF\)](#).

Testimonial: see [sensory evidential](#).

Theme:

- (1) what the [rheme](#) is about, comparable to [topic](#); typically an active [referent](#). Term used by the Prague School.
- (2) (less relevant to this glossary) the semantic role for a transferred entity ('I gave you a *book*'), similar to the patient semantic role.

Theticity,thetic sentence: presenting all the information as one piece, in a sentence that does not have a [topic](#) expression. The topic [referent](#) can be the 'here and now' ([stage topic](#)); the sentence can be seen as 'all comment' or 'all focus'. Compare to [categorical sentence](#).

Further reading: Sasse (1996; 2006).

Thirdhand: an [information source](#) indicating that the content of the utterance was obtained via a [reported evidence](#) given by someone who had obtained the [information](#) through another report (Aikhenvald 2018a). See also [reported evidence](#).

Topic: what the sentence is about; what the information in the [comment](#) is anchored to, for example when talking about mangos, one could say 'Mangos I've seen a lot in Senegal', where the information that lots were seen (=the comment) is added to the topic [mangos]. There are different types of topics, see [contrastive topic](#), [shift topic](#), [familiarity topic](#), [scene-setting topic](#).

Further reading: Sornicola (2006), Roberts (2019).

Topic continuity: when consecutive clauses or sentences share the same topic, for example '*The wizards* got together in the tower. *They* cooked up a cunning plan for world peace, [zero] agreed on a to-do list and [zero] set to work. *They* brewed potions all night long'.

Trustworthiness: see [reliability](#).

Truth focus: term used for [polarity focus](#) and [verum](#) – see there.

U

Unexpectedness: indicating that an unanticipated situation arises: the speaker did not have any previous expectation about the event – not to be confused with [counterexpectation](#) which implicates a more specific previous idea or expectation – compare there. Finnish exemplifies the difference between the two: it uses a clitic =han for ‘I didn’t expect this and I had no evidence to the contrary’ (unexpected) and a clitic =kin for ‘I had previous evidence to the contrary and now discover this is incorrect’ (counterexpected). See also [unprepared mind](#).

Unprepared mind: psycholinguistic term used for [unexpectedness](#) to explain [mirativity](#) meanings (Slobin & Aksu 1982; Aikhenvald 2012) – compare there.

Unseen: see [non-visual evidential](#).

Unused: having an activation status fairly low on the [accessibility](#) scale. Compare [inactive](#) and [semi-active](#).

Upgraded access: the speaker reports about the physical and mental state of someone close to the speaker as if speaking about oneself in the use of [evidential](#) and [egophoric](#) markers (Aikhenvald 2024: 11).

V

Validational: see [validator](#).

Validator: an umbrella term used in the past (seemingly in Quechuan and Andean literature) for markers relating to the speaker’s certainty about the information or to the [information source](#) (e.g. Adelaar (1977). According to van Gijn (2006: 246), it marks how [committed](#) the speaker is to the content of the sentence given the circumstances.
→ Synonym of validational, verificational.

Veridical:

This term has two different uses:

- (3) marker of [verum](#) (Azeb Amha 2001) – see there.
- (4) the property of being true; when the speaker is dedicated to the truth of a proposition.

Verificational: term used in North-American linguistics for [validator](#) – see there.

Verum: emphatically confirming the truth of the utterance to avoid its negation being taken as the truth – ‘They DID go to Kenya!’ (although you thought they did not). Unlike [polarity focus](#), it cannot be used as an answer to a yes/no question. Further reading: Gutzmann et al. (2020), Lohnstein (2014).

Viewpoint: (within): see [epistemic perspective](#).

Visual evidence: information source deriving from sight. See also [visual evidential](#) and [eyewitness evidential](#). Is often also used as a synonym for [direct evidence](#) as well, although this logically includes non-visual direct evidence too.

Visual evidential: an [evidential](#) marker signaling that the [information source](#) is visual.
→ Synonym of [eyewitness evidential](#) (1).

VP focus: [focus](#) on the verb phrase, typically in answer to a question ‘What did S do?’.

W

Weak/assumptive egophoric: unrestricted [egophoric](#) constructions within the [egophoric distribution](#), i.e. they can take first-person subjects or non-first-person subjects without being ungrammatical (San Roque et al. 2017), for example in using the egophoric form when referring to the speaker’s child. See also [egophoric distribution](#), [egophoric evidential](#).

→ Antonym of [strong egophoric](#).

→ Synonym of wide scope egophoric, loose egophoric.

Wide focus: see [broad focus](#).

Wide scope egophoric: see [weak egophoric](#).

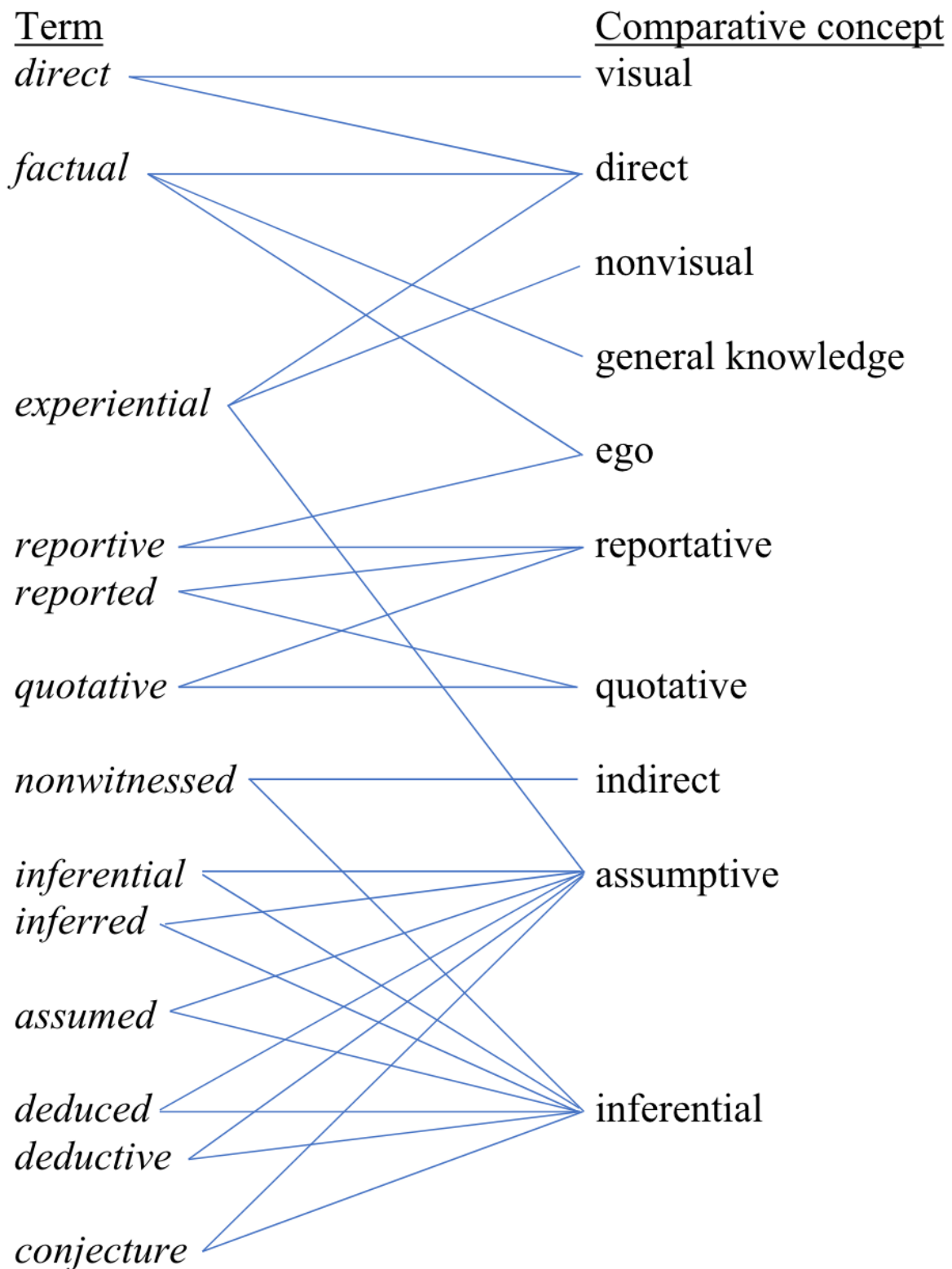
Table 1 - Evidential classifications – adapted from Hengeveld & dall’Aglio Hattnher (2015)

Source	Classification of evidential categories						
Hengeveld & dall’Aglio (2015)	Representational				Interpersonal		
	Event perception			Deduction	Inference	Reportativity	
Willett (1988)	Direct			Indirect			
	Attested			Inferring		Reported	
	Visual	Auditory	Other	Results	Reasoning	second-hand	third-hand
De Haan (1998)	Direct			Indirect			
	Visual	Auditory	Other	Inferential		Quotative	
Plungian (2010)	Direct Access			Indirect Access			
	Personal			Personal		Impersonal	
	Participatory	Visual	Non-visual	Inferential	Presumptive	Reportative	
San Roque and Loughname (2012)	Direct			Indirect			
	Participatory	Visual	Sensory	Inferring		Reported	
				Results	Reasoning		
Aikhenvald (2004)	Visual		Sensory	Inference	Assumption	Hearsay	Quotative

Table 2 - Different definitions of Egophoric Distribution in language descriptions - adapted from San Roque et al. (2017)

Terminology used for Egophoric systems			
Language	Source	Egophoric item term	Non-egophoric item term
Awá Pit	Curnow (1997) Curnow (2002b)	Locutor Conjunct	Non-locutor Disjunct
Foe	Rule (1977)	Participatory	Seen (evidence)
Galo	Post (2013)	Egophoric	Alterphoric
Jirel	Strahm (1975)	Conjunct	Disjunct
Mangghuer	Slater (2003)	Subjective	Objective
Newar	Bendix (1992) Hale & Watters (1973)	Internal evidence; Conjunct	External evidence or characterizing form; Disjunct
Northern Akhvakh	Creissels (2008)	Assertor's involvement	Non-assertor involvement
Amdo Tibetan	Sun (1993)	Self person	Other person
Lhasa Tibetan	DeLancey (1997) DeLancey (2012) Garrett (2001) Hill (2012) Tournadre (1996, 2008)	Unmarked; personal knowledge; Ego evidential; Personal (evidential); Egophoric	Mirative; immediate or generic (evidentials); Direct (evidential) Factual or testimonial (evidential); other evidentials (earlier: heterophoric)
Tsafiki	Dickinson (2000)	Congruent	Non-congruent

Figure 1: Polysemy and homonymy of evidential terms (Keinänen 2021: 574)



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Links to other glossaries

Carston 2002 Relevance Theory glossary:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/9780470754603.app1>

SIL glossary of linguistic terms: <https://glossary.sil.org/term>

Reference

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