

# Is there evidence for evidentiality in Gascony Occitan?

Claus D. Pusch

In Romance languages, most linguistic elements for which the status of markers of evidentiality has been postulated, mark evidential values either through their lexical meaning or by semantic extensions of their primary grammatical meaning that belong to the realm of modality or temporality. As markers of evidential values, most of these elements or strings are only weakly grammaticalized. In this contribution, the Gascony Occitan ‘Enunciative’, a paradigm of highly recurrent and strongly grammaticalized preverbal markers, is presented and analyzed as a candidate for a ‘grammatical evidential’ in a Romance variety. Examples from mainly oral sources suggest that these morphemes function as markers of differential (positive) assertive values associated with the propositions in which they appear. It is claimed that assertivity and evidentiality, though being distinct categories, may be functionally intertwined and that the overt marking of assertion conveys evidential meaning in that the speaker thereby refers to elements of experience or to the authority of her-/himself or others. Still, the Gascon Enunciative probably cannot count as an evidential in the strongest (or narrowest) sense of the term, i.e. as an element that has the indication of the source of information as its primary meaning, as the semantic-pragmatic link to the source and reliability of the speaker’s knowledge is a merely indirect one here, too.\*

## *1. The difficult task of identifying evidentiality in Romance*

Since Chafe’s and Nichols’ groundbreaking volume (Chafe & Nichols 1986), the notion of evidentiality, going back to work by Franz Boas and Roman Jakobson (cf. Aikhenvald 2004:11-17), has gained increasing importance in linguistic research, and the term is now firmly established and widely used. The basic definition of evidentiality is that of “a grammatical category that has source of information as its primary meaning” (Aikhenvald 2006:320). The distinctions among the possible types of sources of information depend on the complexity of the respective evidential system, but a fundamental distinction may be drawn between direct, or firsthand, evidence and indirect, or non-firsthand, evidence for the information source, with indirect / non-firsthand evidence being based on either report or inference, as outlined in Willett’s (1988:57) schema. According to the typological survey on types of evidential coding (De Haan 2005a and 2005b) included in the “World Atlas of Language Structures”

(WALS; cf. Haspelmath et al. eds. 2005), indirect / non-firsthand evidence seems to be marked more frequently and systematically among the world's languages that code evidentiality, than direct / firsthand evidence, which constitutes the unmarked or default case in many of these languages.

On the WALS maps on evidentiality, the linguistic elements that code the source of information, i.e. the way in which the speaker has come to know what s/he is communicating, are called 'grammatical evidentials', which is in accordance with the above-mentioned definition of evidentiality. At this point, one must ask what counts as a grammatical evidential and, *a fortiori*, as an expression of evidentiality. Aikhenvald (2006:321) reminds us that "[e]very language has some lexical way of referring to information source", and this does not correspond to what 'evidential' *stricto sensu* means, but recent discussion on the extension and extensibility of the notion 'evidentiality' has shown that it is delicate to decide where lexical expression of information source ends and grammatical expression of information source begins (Squartini to appear); in other words, how grammaticalized elements of a language have to be in order to qualify as evidentials. According to de Haan (2005b), the vast majority of languages that code evidentiality do so through verbal affixes or verbal clitics, or through separate particles, i.e. grammatical elements not necessarily forming part of the verb phrase. A far smaller part of the languages in the WALS sample express evidentiality through inflectional elements of the tense system. The smallest group of formal expressions of evidentiality is one where 'modal particles' are used as evidentials (which, *ex negativo*, suggests that modal particles have been excluded in WALS from the much larger group of 'separate particles' just mentioned). Interestingly, three of the seven languages where, in de Haan's (2005b) sample, evidentiality is expressed through such modal particles are located in Western Europe, an area where otherwise, according to the WALS maps, only Basque appears as a language with grammatical evidentials. In fact, according to de Haan (2005b:7), "[t]he evidential use of modals is mainly a western European feature. It occurs in most Germanic languages, as well as in Finnish. In these languages evidentiality is another interpretation of modal verbs".

Evidential uses, or, to put it more cautiously: "evidential-like extensions" (Aikhenvald 2006:321) of modal verbs, and, more specifically, verbs expressing epistemic modality, have been an area of intense recent research on evidentiality in Romance (Squartini 2001, 2003, 2005, to appear; Cornillie 2004), and strong arguments have been given in order to justify the admission of modal verbs among

devices used to code evidentiality. A second area within the grammatical system of Romance languages where the dimension of evidentiality and evidential uses have been identified as relevant is that of tense and mood forms, with the French conditional and its Romance cognates (Dendale 1994; Dendale & Tasmowski eds. 2001 and articles therein; Kronning 2005), the future (Squartini 2003, 2004, 2005) and the Spanish imperfect past (Haßler 1998, 2002; Volkmann 1999, 2005) at the forefront of linguists' interest. Again, this area of research is linked to the field of modality, as at least two of the analyzed verbal forms, i.e. the conditional and the future, are known to notoriously oscillate between temporal and modalizing functions. However, the relation between (epistemic) modality and evidentiality is far from uncontroversial. While Palmer (2001:8) does not hesitate to speak of 'evidential modality' and to treat it together with epistemic modality under what he calls "propositional modality", explaining that:

epistemic modality and evidential modality are concerned with the speaker's attitude to the truth-value or factual status of the proposition [...] The essential difference between these two types is [...] that with epistemic modality speakers express their judgments about the factual status of the proposition, whereas with evidential modality they indicate the evidence they have for its factual status.

Aikhenvald, as an advocate for a strict separation of both notional domains, emphasizes that "[e]videntiality is a verbal grammatical category in its own right, and it does not bear any straightforward relationship to truth, the validity of a statement, or the speaker's responsibility. Neither is evidentiality a subcategory of epistemic or any other modality" (Aikhenvald 2006:320).

The controversy about the relationship between modality and evidentiality is due to both functional and formal issues: even if one does not adopt Palmer's point of view according to which evidentiality is a subtype of modality, it has to be acknowledged – and even advocates of a restrictive definition of evidentiality do so – that there is considerable overlap between the two: Aikhenvald (2004:106 ff.) mentions that mood and modality, among other grammatical categories, may acquire "overtones similar to some semantic features of evidentials", and she labels these evidential extensions as "evidentiality strategies"; on the other hand, in her sample of languages possessing evidentiality she also finds *stricto sensu* instances where grammatical evidentials acquire epistemic overtones. 'Source of information as PRI-

MARY meaning', as the decisive defining criterion, is difficult to apply when neither synchronic / formal nor diachronic evidence is available to decide which function in functionally ambivalent grammatical elements is the primary one (Squartini to appear). The formal issue is also at stake here: the functional units in the realm of evidentiality proper, called '(grammatical) evidentials', as mentioned above, seem to have to pertain to highly grammaticalized types of morphemes and be preferably part of the inflectional morphology of the respective language. Lexical means of expressing the source of information are excluded from evidentiality proper, the crucial argument being that such means, as expressed in Aikhenvald's (2006:321) quote, are ubiquitous and their inclusion under the heading 'evidentiality' would inevitably reduce the category's descriptive and explicatory value in a significant way. Again, defenders of a broader notion of evidentiality show that the boundary between the lexical and the grammatical character of an element in language is frequently blurred. Furthermore, Squartini (to appear) insists on the fact that, as far as modal verbs with evidential meaning or with evidential uses are concerned, it does not make sense to maintain that these meanings and uses belong to the lexicon.

So if, for the purpose of clarity and unambiguity of the notion, we stick to the narrow definition of evidentiality and to the vision of evidentials as highly morphologized or grammaticalized functional elements devoid of autonomous lexical meaning, do we find examples of languages or language varieties among Romance tongues that have undisputedly grammatical expressions of this category, which comply with the more restrictive views of evidentiality and, perhaps, might even justify including these varieties with those languages that boast an evidential system?

According to Squartini, Romanian, with its so-called Presumptive Mood, is "the only Romance language with clear grammatical markers dedicated to evidentiality" (Squartini to appear: n. 2). The Romanian Presumptive is a verbal periphrasis including the auxiliary *a fi* 'to be' plus a non-inflected form of the main verb (present / gerundial or past participle). This periphrasis may combine with future, conditional and conjunctive mood forms whenever these forms are used to express inferential / conjectural values, which are normally considered as instances of non-first hand evidentiality (see Squartini 2005 for details). Verbal-periphrastic expression is not mentioned separately in de Haan's (2005b) list of formal types of grammatical evidentials, but since auxiliary verbs frequently tend to become particle-like elements, the Romanian Presumptive may be included with the 'sepa-

rate particle' type, which is the second-most formal type in de Haan's sample. In paragraph 2, I would like to present another candidate for a "clear grammatical marker dedicated to evidentiality" in Romance, which would belong to the same formal type of separate evidential particles: the preverbal markers in Southwestern Occitan, commonly called Enunciative(s).

## *2. Enunciatives in Gascony Occitan as (possible) grammatical evidentials*

### *2.1. The Enunciative paradigm*

Occitan (also known as *Langue d'oc*) is a Romance minority language traditionally spoken in the Southern parts of France and some adjacent valleys in Northern Italy and Northern Spain. After a period of literary splendor and incipient standardization in the Middle Age, from the 13<sup>th</sup> century on this language was increasingly driven out of scriptural use and relegated to the status of an exclusively orally used *patois*, a process that has favored dialectal divergence and maintenance of specific dialectal features. Only from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on, some (still precarious) form of re-standardization and re-introduction into written usage has been achieved, but language decay and loss is now in an advanced stage in most areas where the language has been previously in use, with (standard or regional) French taking over the functions of the vernacular language.

One of the more vivid and, at the same time, most remarkable dialects of Occitan is the variety spoken in Southwest France and in the Pyrenees, known as Gascony Occitan or Gascon. This dialect area shows some phonetic, morphological and morpho-syntactic specificities not found elsewhere in the Occitan domain, many of which have been attributed to substratum influence of Basque, a language with which Gascony Occitan has always been and still is in contact and that counts among the languages with grammatical evidentials in the form of separate evidential particles, as alluded to before. It might therefore be tempting to look for evidentiality in Gascony Occitan as a possible result of language contact, a process described, e.g., by Aikhenvald (2004:335 and *passim*) for Romance varieties in contact with languages possessing prototypical evidential systems in South America.

The most salient morphosyntactic particularity of Gascony Occitan (albeit not in all of its sub-dialects) is the existence of a

paradigm of preverbal particles for which the term ‘Enunciative(s)’ (French *particule énonciative* or, briefly, *énonciatif*) has been adopted. The most frequent form of this Enunciative particle is preverbal *que*, homophonous with the (pan-Romance) complementizer morpheme *que* going back to Latin *QUEM / QUOD / QUIA*. This formal coincidence has led scholars to the conjecture that preverbal Gascon *que* is indeed the complementizer morpheme of a deleted matrix clause involving a verb of perception, cognition or utterance. However, this account alone, reminiscent of the Performative Analysis in Generative Semantics (Ross 1968), can not explain satisfactorily the linearization pattern in contemporary Gascon, where the Enunciative particle precedes the verb but follows a (lexical or pronominal) subject, as in (1):<sup>1</sup>

- (1) lo Napoleon qu’a hèit hòrt un bon ahar  
the.MASC Napoleon ENC has made strong a.MASC good affair  
‘Napoleon has made a pretty good deal’

The second-most frequent Enunciative particle is preverbal *e*, which is typically found in subordinate clauses (2) and interrogative sentences (3):

- (2) [talking about a hungry bear:]  
que n’ei tanben quan eths aulhèrs e pujan tara montanha  
ENC PART is also when the.MASC.PL shepherd.PL ENC climb.3P to+the.  
FEM mountain  
‘(he) also is like this when the shepherds move up to the mountains’
- (3) e voletz voletz vos asseitar aqui?  
ENC want.2P want.2P you.ACC.2P sit.INF here  
‘do you want do you want to sit down here?’

Preverbal *que* is most commonly found in declarative main clauses (as in (1)) but may also appear in interrogative sentences and subordinate clauses:

- (4) qu’ès anada au collègi on?  
ENC are.2S gone.FEM to+the.MASC high-school where  
‘(you) have gone to high school where?’
- (5) que pensi que aquera idea que’t deu vier  
ENC think.1S COMP that.FEM idea ENC you.DAT.2S must.3S come.INF  
‘(I) think that that idea must come to your mind’

The Enunciative particles have been interpreted by linguists in various ways: whereas some scholars in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century dismissed them as ‘expletive’ elements (Lespy 1858), as now function-

less remains of subordination structures involving a verb of utterance – as alluded to above –, more recent studies have interpreted these particles as disambiguating devices that are used to mark different sentence (or speech act) types (Rohlf's 1970 [1935]; Campos 1986, 1992). Another line of argumentation tried to link the development of the Enunciatives to a diachronic process in which Gallo-Romance (and most prominently French) developed a V2 word order pattern, with the verb becoming fixed in second position, a process in which the Enunciative served to fill the preverbal slot (like subject pronouns do in Modern French) and allowed to maintain object pronoun enclisis in preverbal position (Bec 1968; Baumann 1982; Joseph 1992); some advocates of this approach go as far as to claim subject-pronoun-like status for the Enunciative, whereas other scholars consider it as an auxiliary (Field 1989). Still another line of reasoning, influenced particularly by the French linguist G. Guillaume and his psycho-mechanic approach to language, considers the Enunciative particles to be copula-like abstract linking elements that establish (“actualize”) the relation between the subject and the predicate (Lafont 1967; Joly 1976, 2004). However, the most productive and most promising approach to the puzzling preverbal markers of Gascony Occitan has been developed within a semantico-pragmatic framework. The term ‘evidentiality’ has never been mentioned in this work; instead, the notions of assertion and, more precisely, of affirmativity play a central role in these approaches.

## *2.2. The Enunciative as a marker of assertion and affirmativity*

The first scholar who used the concept of ‘affirmativity’ to describe the function of the Gascon Enunciative was Jean Bouzet, for whom these particles “opposé en principe, non pas la négation à l’affirmation, mais sur un terrain élargi où sont fondus ces deux aspects, l’affirmé au non-affirmé” (Bouzet 1951:50). Bouzet noted that preverbal *que* and *e* alternated in some cases, topologically and functionally, with the equally preverbal adverbials *ye / ja* (from Latin *IAM* ‘already’) and *be* (from Latin *BENE* ‘well’). (6) and (7) illustrate occurrences of these adverbials in the Enunciative slot in contemporary oral usage:

- (6) *e* après bon *be* demandam de subvencions  
and after good well.ENC demand.1P of subsidies  
‘and then okay (we) obviously ask for grants’
- (7) *ja* èra un pesacide quan mèma  
already.ENC was.3S a.MASC weigh-acid when self  
‘(this) must have been a measuring instrument for acids’

As can be deduced from the (free) translations, in such cases the adverbs have departed from their original evaluative (in the case of *be*) or temporal meaning (in the case of *ja*) and assume a more pragmatic function. This process of pragmaticalization is not restricted to Gascony Occitan; for instance, the use of originally temporal *ya* as a discursive or pragmatic element is well attested in Spanish, both European (Campos 1986) and Latin-American (Koike 1996). According to González (2000), the use of preverbal *ya* is particularly common in the Spanish of the Basque Country due to language contact with Basque, as “Basque speakers identify the Spanish temporal adverb *ya* with the Basque affirmative prefix *ba-* and transfer its affirmative function to the Spanish adverb” (González 2000:309). Basque *ba-* is used “when the affirmative quality of the verb constitutes the focus of the sentence” (González 2000:309), a phenomenon called “emphatic affirmation” by González, which is one of the pragmatic values that the preverbal *ya* in Basque Spanish has taken on and which corresponds also to the value attributed to preverbal Enunciative-like uses of Gascon *ye / ja*. For Bouzet (1951:52) Gascon *ye / ja* is used to emphatically mark an affirmative statement “parce qu’elle [sc.: the affirmative statement] est jugée incontestable par le sujet parlant qui se porte garant du fait”. *Ye / ja* (and *be*), as markers of emphatic affirmation, are paradigmatically opposed to *que*, that marks affirmation without strong emphasis, and *e*, which characterizes a verbal predicate “qui n’est pas affirmé par le sujet parlant, soit parce que celui-ci n’en assure pas la réalité [...], soit parce qu’il se contente de le rapporter” (Bouzet 1951:50). Field (1985) interprets the paradigm formed by Gascony Occitan *e*, *que*, *ja* and *be* as “a continuum expressing the degree of intensity with which the speaker is putting forward the proposition” (Field 1985:81): “*Que* represents the normal level of subscription associated with unmarked assertion [...] Lesser commitment to the propositional content than that associated with *que* is carried by *e*, which is thus the basic unassertive particle [...] Greater strength is carried by *be*, and *ja* expresses the highest level of subscription” (Field 1985:81s.). The author furthermore points out the significant absence of an Enunciative, i.e. a functional zero morpheme: “Complete absence of speaker subscription can surface as Ø.” (Field 1985:82)

As will have become obvious, the terms ‘affirmativity’ and ‘assertion’ have been used somehow loosely and interchangeably in the previous paragraph. More strictly speaking, the attribute ‘affirmative’ concerns the issue of polarity and is opposed to ‘negative’. The view of the Enunciative as an affirmativity marker in that sense – i.e. a

non-negative marker – is not uncommon in the literature, because the preverbal slot in Gascony Occitan is indeed occupied, normally and normatively, by either an Enunciative or a preverbal negation marker. The co-occurrence of both markers is extremely rare in the data, with (8) being an example from oral discourse:

- (8) poderiém continuar damb donar d'hèt(e)s istoriques mes que non ei pas era pena  
could.1P continue.INF with give.INF of facts historic.PL but ENC not is NEG the.FEM pain  
'we could go on with giving historical facts but (this) isn't worth the while'

While most descriptions of Gascon morphology have restricted the option of co-occurrence of the Enunciative and negation markers diatopically to certain peripheral sub-dialects, Bouzet (1951:50) and Hetzron (1977) consider them as systematically motivated; for Hetzron, "ces combinaisons doivent être interprétées comme des négations emphatiques et insistantes" (Hetzron 1977:164). This judgment of an emphatic and insistent value of preverbal *que* seems to contradict Field's above-mentioned statement that *que* represents the "normal level of subscription associated with unmarked assertion"; however, the contradiction is less blatant when we reconsider that affirmativity is the unmarked member of the polarity distinction, and the mere fact of marking affirmativity is 'above the ordinary level' and may therefore be considered emphatic or insistent. Hence the link, implicitly established by most of the quoted scholars, between affirmativity and assertion: morphologically marking the affirmative character of an utterance equals putting emphasis on the assertion made by the speaker, i.e. expressing a high degree of speaker subscription and commitment, in Field's (1985) words.

In order to prove that assertion is involved in the function of the Enunciative, the distribution of these particles in subordinate clauses has to be taken into account. Assertion in discourse logic and semantics is opposed to presupposition. Subordinate clauses are frequently considered as logically 'subordinate' to the main clause and therefore as presupposed and non-assertible. In fact, certain subordinate clauses after factive or antifactive predicates, such as (9) – an oral example from Field's (1985) corpus – or (10) – from Pilawa's (1990) literary corpus –, do not contain *que* but *e* – the "basic unassertive particle" according to Field – in their Enunciative slot:

- (9) que'm pensavi que Pierre e la cromptèra  
ENC me.DAT thought.1S COMP Pierre ENC her.ACC buy.SUBJ  
'I thought that Pierre would buy it'
- (10) qu'aven paur que los patacaires e tornassen dab mei d'ajuda  
ENC had.3P fear COMP the.PL blows ENC return.SUBJ with more of help  
'they feared that the blows would recommence even harder'

*E* introduction in subordinate clauses also corresponds to what prescriptive grammars of Gascony Occitan consider as the norm. However, it is well known that the distribution of assertive and presupposed segments in complex sentences does not always follow this path and is far from trivial (Hopper & Thompson 1973; Thompson & Mulac 1991; Thompson 2002), and that assertability of subordinate clauses may vary according to clause types, matrix verbs and discourse structure. While restrictive relative clauses and most adverbial clauses are presupposed, non-restrictive relative clauses, a limited number of adverbial clauses and – most notably – many complement clauses are not presupposed and may carry assertion. As Hetzron (1977) and Field (1985) have shown, in these types of embedded clauses preverbal *que* is found more frequently than preverbal *e*, a tendency in perfect accordance with the oral data analyzed here (cf. Pusch 2001:118ff.); spoken-language examples (11-12) illustrate this case:

- (11) que sèi que jo/ Y\* qu'ei un amic de teatre  
ENC know.1S COMP I/ Y\* ENC is a friend of theater  
'(I) know that I/ Y\* is a friend of performing arts'
- (12) que soi segur que cada primtemps que n'i rodilhavan tres o quate  
ENC am sure COMP every spring ENC PART there run\_around.IMP three  
or four  
'(I) am sure that each spring three or four (of them) knocked around'

Contrary to what these examples may suggest, the phenomenon of *que* insertion in complement clauses is not limited to cases where the matrix clause is made up of modalizing expressions of certainty, but in such cases preverbal *que* seems to surface systematically.

Still in the same context of distribution of assertive values in complex sentences, the opposite phenomenon of *que* deletion (or, expressed more cautiously: absence of *que*) in – syntactically speaking – main clauses is found with certain verbs of perception, cognition and utterance (“PCU verbs”), such as *think*, *know* or *say*, which may appear in parenthetical position. The concept of parenthetical verbs, first introduced by Urmson (1952), has attracted interest from both syntacticians and pragmaticians (cf. Schneider 2007 for an

overview): although parentheticals constitute the syntactic matrix element of a complex sentence, they are pragmatically (and semantically) ‘downgraded’ to adverbial- or discourse-marker status, thus losing assertible main-clause status, and this categorial change leads to some morphosyntactic and syntactic peculiarities. This holds true for Gascony Occitan in a particularly salient way (Pusch 2003): when used parenthetically in a very typical manner – i.e. in medial or final position with respect to the asserted ‘subordinate’ clause – these PCU verbs, such as *pensar* ‘to think’, appear preceded by the low-assertive Enunciative *e* (a rather rare case, however) or without any Enunciative particle at all (a frequent phenomenon), as in (13):

- (13) *que’s va caler Ø pensi que parlaram tots anglés*  
ENC REFL go.3S be\_necessary ENC think.1S COMP speak.FUT.1P all:PL  
english  
‘(it) will be necessary (I) think that we all speak English’

Enunciative-less occurrences of parenthesis-prone PCU verbs are attested even in initial position where parenthetical and assertive uses are more difficult to disentangle both structurally and semantically; (14) illustrates the case of a clear-cut parenthetical *pensi* ‘I think’ (lacking an Enunciative particle) in initial position, in comparison with an intuitively more assertive and Enunciative-preceded *pensi* in (5, repeated here as 15):

- (14) *Ø pensi que lo moviment occitan qu’a crotzat la mea revolta*  
ENC think.1S COMP the.MASC movement occitan ENC has crossed the.  
FEM my.FEM revolution  
‘(I) think the Occitan movement has converged with my revolutionary period of life’
- (15) *que pensi que aquera idea que’t deu vier*  
‘(I) think that that idea must come to your mind’

The ascription of assertive values in (15) is problematic, with both segments tending to be the object of speaker subscription, and this is reflected by the double insertion of Enunciative *que* in both the matrix and the complement clause, whereas in (14) only the (again merely syntactically) subordinate clause is the object of the speaker’s commitment.

If the Enunciative particles in Gascony Occitan are indeed (affirmative) assertion markers, as the preceding analyses suggest, a crucial question that must be addressed in the final section is: what does assertion marking have to do with evidentiality?

### 3. Assertivity and evidentiality

The notion of ‘assertion’ belongs, as it would seem, primarily to the realm of philosophy of language, to discourse-logics, and to speech-act theory, whereas the notion of ‘evidentiality’ is more closely associated with the relationship between statements and facts, i.e. with the factual / empirical basis of communication, and with grammar. However, the ‘missing link’ between the two categories might be filled by what Green (2006:539) calls the “word-to-world direction of fit”, which this author considers as fundamental for assertion and which certainly is also a characteristic feature of evidentiality. According to Green, “inherent in the practice of asserting is the norm that the speaker’s words are supposed to track how things are.” (Green 2006:539) By asserting a proposition (P), one is “exposing oneself to liability to error on the issue of P” (Green 2006:539), a fact that has been described by Raible (in Pilawa 1990) and others, in relation to the Gascon Enunciative, as the acceptance of communicative responsibility (“kommunikative Regresspflicht”), which includes that the speaker – as issuer of an asserted statement – is willing to expose her-/himself to a conversational *défi*: “one who asserts P is thereby open to the challenge, ‘How do you know?’ [...] in that case its issuer is obliged to respond with reasons that would justify the contested claim. Those reasons might invoke items of experience or the authority of others” (Green 2006:539), hence elements of knowledge typically encoded by evidentials or evidentiality strategies.

As Aikhenvald (2004:335) emphasizes, “[i]n a language with evidentials, asking ‘how do you know this?’ makes little sense. It is all there, in the speaker’s contribution”. In other words, in a language with a full-fledged evidential system, the communicative challenge created by assertion is automatically met or, at least, considered by the hearer to be met. The (correct) use of evidentials has social consequences for the speakers, as Aikhenvald (2004:360ff. and *passim*) illustrates: “Accuracy in getting one’s information source right is crucial for successful communication and for the speaker’s reputation” (Aikhenvald 2004:335). This, again, converges with what Green (2006:539) tells us about the communicative benefits of – otherwise rather risky – assertive propositions: “one whose assertions turn out to be reliably correct, or at least widely accepted, garners credibility. That in turn is a source of social authority”. We can therefore contend that assertivity and evidentiality are distinct categories but that they may be functionally intertwined: assertions may be made without falling back upon evidentials or evidentiality strategies, and due to the

omnipresence of and the generalized respect for the Gricean maxims governing (successful) communication, assertivity is considered to be the default interpretation of declarative propositions. However, when evidentiality is (morphologically) marked, this may foster the assertive dimension of the utterance, or, expressed differently, strengthen or weaken its assertive interpretation, according to the evidential employed. Conversely, the (morphological) marking of assertion, or, to be more precise, the differential marking of assertive values, conveys evidential meaning in that the speaker refers – albeit indirectly – to those “items of experience or the authority of others” (to take up Green’s wording) which allow (or disallow) her/him to take over communicative responsibility.

To conclude, let us go back to the initial question that provided the title for the present paper: is there evidence for evidentiality in Gascon Occitan? Or – put differently – which are the arguments that speak in favor of considering the Gascon Enunciative as a marker of evidentiality, and which are those contradicting such a claim?

Formally, it will have become obvious that the Gascon Enunciative, contrary to most items or constructions in Romance for which evidentiality status has been suggested, is a highly grammaticalized element of this dialect, which encodes pragmatic and illocutionary information without recurring to any lexical meaning. In fact, the polyfunctional *que* is probably among the least semantically-loaded elements that one can find in Romance. Subjectively and perceptually, the Enunciative particles are a compulsory element for a sentence in the Occitan varieties concerned to be considered complete and correct by its native speakers. The impression of ‘incompleteness’ purported in the literature and observed by the author of this paper during his fieldwork in Gascony may, obviously, be due to other factors than those associated with assertivity or evidentiality, because the highly recurrent insertion namely of *que* as well as the characteristic phenomena of pronominal clisis give Gascon specific rhythmic patterns that may, in the ears of native speakers, collapse when preverbal *ques* are missing. Functionally, then, although the link between assertivity and evidentiality, as described above, appears plausible and admissible even if a restrictive use is made of the notion of ‘evidentiality’ (*pace* Aikhenvald 2006:320, quoted earlier), one has to admit that the claim of information-source marking being the primary and unambiguously dominant function of the Enunciative particles is too strong. This is partly due to the highly grammaticalized characters of the elements that constitute the Enunciative paradigm and to very scarce historical documentation, which allows, at best,

arguing with plausibility but not with proof: historically, a relation has been suggested between raising structures of the proleptic type as illustrated in (16) – a pan-Romance construction going back to Latin and Greek models, but particularly frequent in current and, seemingly, Old Occitan – and the genesis of the Gascon Enunciative (Lafont 1967; Sauzet 1989; Pusch 2001:224ff.):

- (16) *vesi ton pair que ven* (Lafont 1967:382)  
see.1S your.MASC father COMP(= ENC?) comes  
'(I) see (that) your father comes'
- (17) *sabi ton pair que vendrà* (Sauzet 1989:242)  
know.1S your.MASC father COMP(= ENC?) come.FUT.3P  
'(I) know (that) your father will come'

These prolepses are known to occur particularly often with the same class of PCU verbs mentioned before in the context of parentheticality, which frequently express, as *saber* and *véser / veire* do in the quoted (non-Gascon but Central Occitan) examples, knowledge and visual perception, hence categories which belong to the core area of evidentiality. However, this path of grammaticalization leading from syntactic proleptic raising structures to Enunciative formation is largely conjectural in its historic validity, and in any case it would not have been the PCU verb that has grammaticalized into the assertion- and, possibly, evidentiality-marking function, but it would be the complementizer morpheme. Aikhenvald (2004:287) emphasizes that “we need to know what intermediate stages of grammaticalization of evidentials look like” and deplores that we do not know yet, and the same holds for Enunciative grammaticalization, at least in its historically early stages. Furthermore, as has been shown in 2.2, grammaticalization of the Enunciative continues, with preverbal *que* generalizing into syntactic contexts where preverbal *e* or zero would be expected, thus further blurring the image of a differential marking of information source, illocutionary force, affirmative assertion or other communicative values.

Therefore, the Gascon Enunciative is not or not yet an instance of an evidential system *stricto sensu*. As most Romance candidates for ‘grammatical evidentials’, it oscillates between some kind of modality (assertive modality, in this case) and evidentiality proper. However, both its synchronic distribution and its possible diachronic origins allow to an even lesser degree, in comparison to many other cases where modality and evidentiality are intermingled, to decide which functional or categorical adscription is the primary one and, thus, leave the question open to a higher degree. Used in contexts of ‘evi-

dential extension' or as evidentiality strategy, Enunciative *que* has the potential of developing into an evidential marker, but its on-going extension of use and fostered grammaticalization might eliminate preverbal *e* and reduce the occurrences of functional zeros, thereby preventing the Enunciative paradigm's evolution into something akin to an evidential SYSTEM.

*Address of the Author:*

Claus D. Pusch, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Romanisches Seminar, Platz der Universität 3, D-79085 Freiburg im Breisgau <claus.pusch@romanistik.uni-freiburg.de>

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*Notes*

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Abbreviations used in the morphologic glosses: 1P = 1st person plural; 1S = 1st person singular; 2P = 2nd person plural; 2S = 2nd person singular; 3P = 3rd person plural; 3S = 3rd person singular; ACC = accusative; COMP = complementizer; DAT = dative; ENC = enunciative; FEM = feminine; FUT = future; IMP = imperfect past; INF = infinitive; MASC = masculine; NEG = negator; P = Plural; PART = partitive; REFL = reflexive pronoun; SUBJ = subjunctive.