

Epistemic Modality and Evidentiality

Bahren Umar Siregar
Universitas Sumatera Utara

Abstract

There are no clear boundaries between epistemic modality, the coding of the degree of commitment on the part of the speaker to her statement, and evidentiality, the coding of the source of information, in the study of modality in Bahasa Indonesia or any other ethnic languages in Indonesia. Consequently, the notion of evidentiality tends to be neglected and considered to be part of epistemic modality in the study. This paper attempts to set boundaries between the two notions for the purpose of typological study by looking back at various data of epistemic modality in Bahasa Indonesia and other ethnic languages in North Sumatera. As most epistemic modals as well as evidentials in the languages are encoded lexically, they tend to have more flexible morphosyntactic structure in their use. Some of these modals may to some extent lose some of their meaning in certain semantic and pragmatic contexts and as the result be appropriately reassigned evidential markers.