

# Locative Inversion as Viewed from the Perspective of Evidentiality: A Usage-Based Approach\*

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## 1. Introduction

This article is concerned with elucidating the *raison d'être* of the Locative Inversion Construction (LIC) such as those exemplified below:

- (1) a. Onto the ground had fallen a few leaves.  
b. On the table was placed a tarte Tatin. (Bresnan (1994:78))

The LIC is noteworthy in that it departs from the canonical SVO word order of English. Instead, as seen in the above examples, the word order in this construction can be schematized as [Loc V NP<sub>Sub</sub>].<sup>1</sup> In addition to the surface formal markedness, the LIC is said to be different from its non-inverted counterpart in terms of discourse function and rhetorical effect (Gary (1975), Bolinger (1977), Green (1980), Drubig (1988), Bresnan (1994), among others). As such, the LIC has been addressed from many different perspectives.

The present article does not seek to compete with those previous studies, but rather to complement them. I will shed new light on the study of the LIC from the perspective of *evidentiality*. To put it more precisely, I will demonstrate that the LIC is specifically employed to express direct or firsthand evidentiality, indicating that the information conveyed is gained through the speaker's direct perception.<sup>2</sup> In addition, I will show that such an evidential property of the LIC follows from its similarity and parallelism with the Deictic Inversion Construction (e.g. *Here comes Harry.*), based on Langacker's Dynamic Usage-Based Model (e.g. Langacker (2000)).

## 2. Evidentiality

### 2.1. A Brief Overview of Evidentiality

In this section, I will provide a brief overview of the notion of *evidentiality*. The linguistic

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1 The abbreviations *Loc* and *Sub* stand for *locative phrase* and *subject* respectively.

2 In this article, the term *speaker* is used to refer to a person who perceives and construes the situation described in an LIC (i.e. a speaker, writer, omniscient narrator, or dramatis persona).

notion of evidentiality is traditionally defined as a grammatical category whose primary meaning is information source, making clear the source or reliability of the evidence on which a statement is based (cf. Aikhenvald (2004 : 1) and Matthews (2007)).

Evidentiality systems vary in terms of how many information sources are encoded and how they are marked. With regard to the first question, according to Aikhenvald (2004), there are at most six semantic parameters or criteria in evidentiality systems: visual perception, non-visual perception (sensory), inference, assumption, hearsay, and quotative. As for the second question, it is generally acknowledged that in many languages evidentiality is marked with affixes, clitics, particles, or special verb forms.

For example, let us observe Cherokee, a language spoken by Iroquois people (see Pulte (1985) and Aikhenvald (2004)):

- (2) wesa u-tlis-**Aʔi**  
 cat it-run-FIRSTH. PAST  
 'A cat ran' (I saw it running) (Aikhenvald (2004 : 26))
- (3) u-wonis-**eʔi**  
 he-speak-NON. FIRSTH. PAST  
 'He spoke' (someone told me) (Aikhenvald (2004 : 27))
- (4) u-gahnan-**eʔi**  
 it-rain- NON. FIRSTH. PAST  
 'It rained' (I woke up, looked out and saw puddles of water)  
 (Aikhenvald (2004 : 27))

In (2), the use of the suffix *Aʔi* indicates that the speaker gained the information conveyed by the sentence through his own perceptual experience. That is, sentence (2) encodes *firsthand information*. The use of the suffix *eʔi*, on the other hand, shows that sentence (3) conveys hearsay or reported information. The same suffix can be used to express information gained through inference, as shown in (4). In this way, Cherokee speakers must distinguish *firsthand* and *non-firsthand* past, using suffixes as evidential markers: if one does not mark how he knows something, he runs a risk of being considered linguistically incompetent and not worth talking to (Aikhenvald (2004 : 6)).

## 2.2. Evidentiality in English

English also has a rich repertoire of evidential devices (Chafe (1986)), although it does not have a coherent set of suffixes like those in Cherokee. In English, evidentiality is normally expressed not with grammaticalized elements such as affixes, clitics, particles, but with lexical items such as modal auxiliaries, adverbs, and other phrases, as illustrated below (see also Chafe (1986) and Palmer (1986)):

- (5) I saw her coming down the hill.  
 (6) It may/must have rained. (I woke up, looked out and saw puddles of water.)  
 (7) Mary said that John died.

The phrase *I saw* in (5) indicates that the information of her coming down the hill is based on the speaker's direct perceptual experience. In (6), the modal auxiliaries *may* and *must* show that the information of rain is derived from the fact (or premise) that there were puddles of

water; that is, sentence (6) conveys inferential information. Sentence (7) conveys hearsay information; that is, the speaker was informed of John's death by Mary, which is demonstrated by the phrase *Mary said*.

However, note that, unlike Cherokee, marking information sources is not obligatory in English:

( 8 ) She was coming down the hill.

( 9 ) It rained. (I woke up, looked out and saw puddles of water.)

(10) "What did Mary say?" "John died."

Sentences (5) and (8) are intended to describe more or less the same situation in terms of the speaker's direct perceptual experience.<sup>3</sup> It makes no significant difference whether phrases of visual perception like *I saw* is linguistically realized or not. Likewise, the comparison of (6) and (9) indicates that expressing inferential information does not necessarily require inferential modals like *may* and *must*. A significant difference between (6) and (9) is the reliability or certainty of information: the information conveyed by sentence (9) can be taken as more reliable or certain than the information conveyed by sentence (6). In dialogue (10), the sentence *John died* is pragmatically equivalent to sentence (7) in that it can easily be interpreted as *Mary said that John died*, even though the reporting clause *Mary said* is not explicitly stated. These contrasts indicate not only that marking information sources is optional in English, but also that speakers of English are supposed to put more focus on the reliability or certainty of information than the source of information per se (see also Kamio (1998)).

### 3. Locative Inversion Construction as an Evidential Expression

Besides the above-mentioned evidential system, in which lexical items mark the reliability of information, English seems to have another system to mark and identify information sources. As a working hypothesis, I assume that evidentiality can be encoded in constructions. Specifically, I propose that the LIC indicates direct evidentiality, functioning as an evidential expression conveying information gained through speaker's direct perceptual experience.

#### 3.1. The Scope of the LIC

It is tacitly accepted in literature that the LIC expresses the speaker's visual perception (McCawley (1977), Drubig (1988), Kuno and Takami (2007), Webelhuth (2011), among others). Let us investigate the following example:

(11) [...] Harry squinted. Ron's red hair was visible beneath Madam Pomfrey's arm.

Harry moved his head over on the pillow. In the bed to his right lay Hermione.

(J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*)

As can be inferred from the first sentence (i.e. *Harry squinted.*), this passage describes what

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3 Thus, both (5) and (8) can be used in a context like the following :

- ( i ) a . When I looked up, I saw her coming down the hill.
- b . When I looked up, she was coming down the hill.

Harry saw. In other words, the first sentence (the verb *squinted* in particular) sets the stage that allows the reader to conceptually align his perspective with Harry (cf. Webelhuth (2011 : 86)).

At first sight, explanations of this kind appear to successfully capture the essence of the LIC; however, in some respects, they are insufficient. First, the speaker's observation can be expressed not only by the LIC but also by non-inverted sentences, as shown in (12):

- (12) I opened the bag and looked into it:  
 a. Inside swam plenty of fish, no larger than a fingernail.  
 b. Plenty of fish, no larger than a fingernail, swam inside.

Hence, the *raison d'être* of the LIC should be sought somewhere else.

Second, although many researchers focus on the LIC describing visual perception, it can be used to describe other perceptions, as exemplified below:

- (13) Out of his throat came a horrible sounding voice, "My name is Lexington," it said in a deep, deep voice. (P.T. Bailey, *Spiritual Warfare*)  
 (14) From downstairs boomed a voice, "Baba ["father," in Swahili], Baba!" (S. T. Williams, *Blue Rage, Black Redemption*)

Examples (13) and (14) describe auditory perception. More interesting are the following examples. Sentence (15a) describes the speaker's feeling of fear, while sentence (15b) describes the speaker's excitement:

- (15) a. Up my back crept a chill.  
 b. Down my spine ran a thrill.

It is true that the LIC is typically used to describe the speaker's visual perception; however, these examples clearly indicate that the potential scope of the LIC is not at all limited to the description of visual perception, because one cannot actually see sounds or feelings.

In this light, we can say that the "description of the speaker's observation" is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the use of the LIC. Thus, it is more reasonable to think of the LIC as a linguistic device to mark firsthand information or direct evidentiality, indicating that the information conveyed is gained through direct perception.

### 3.2. Evidence for Evidentiality

This section will provide evidence for the LIC as an evidential expression of firsthand sensory information, demonstrating that the LIC functions as a signal for direct evidentiality. Let us first consider the following example:

- (16) It's raining.

Note that sentence (16) is pragmatically ambiguous. It can be interpreted differently in different contexts, as illustrated below:

- (17) (*The speaker is looking out the window.*) Oh, it's raining.  
 (18) It's raining (, because they are walking under their umbrellas).  
 (19) A: What did John say?  
 B: It's raining.

In (17), the speaker is uttering the sentence on the basis of information he has gained through his own observation; that is, the sentence expresses information gained through *direct*

*perception*. Sentence (18) expresses information gained through *inference*, interpreted as “I conclude that it’s raining from the fact that they are walking under their umbrellas.” In dialogue (19), where speaker B is telling A what John said, the sentence *it’s raining* conveys *hearsay information*. In this way, the sentence *it’s raining* is neutral with respect to evidentiality, and thus can be interpreted differently in accordance with different information sources.

If my proposal is on the right track, i.e., if the LIC is specifically employed to convey firsthand sensory information, then it cannot be used to express inference-based or hearsay information. I use the following pair to test this prediction:

- (20) a. John came into the room.  
b. Into the room came John.

As shown below, the non-inverted sentence in (20a) is, like (16), “evidentially-neutral,” and thus pragmatically ambiguous:

- (21) I looked at the door. Just then, John came into the room. [Direct Perception]  
(22) John came into the room (, because the door was left open). [Inference]  
(23) A: What did Mary say?  
B: John came into the room. [Hearsay]

In (21), the speaker is retrospectively describing what he saw. Sentence (22) expresses inference-based information. Utterance B in (23) conveys hearsay information. In this way, the single sentence *John came into the room* can be used differently in different contexts, and thus can be regarded as unmarked or neutral with regard to evidentiality.

Let us turn our attention to the LIC in (20b). My prediction that sentence (20b) cannot express inference-based or hearsay information is borne out, as illustrated below:

- (24) I looked at the door. Just then, into the room came John. [Direct Perception]  
(25) \*Into the room came John (, because the door was left open). [Inference]  
(26) A: What did Mary say?  
B: \*Into the room came John. [Hearsay]

We can provide further evidence that the LIC is specifically employed to express the speaker’s firsthand perception. First, let us observe the following data, which clearly illustrates that the LIC pertains to reporting direct perception:

- (27) a. The {discovery/\*thought} that *on the wall hung a portrait of Sapir* surprised the old linguist. (McCawley (1977 : 387))  
b. {\*As I recall/As you can see}, across the street is a grocery. (Bolinger (1977 : 94))

As shown in (27a), the LIC can be embedded in the complement of the noun *discovery*, but not in the complement of *thought*; in (27b), the phrase *as you can see* can co-occur with the LIC, while *as I recall* cannot. The reason for this is, as Nakau (1990) points out, that both *thought* and *as I recall* are associated with conception, and not with (direct) perception.

Second, the modal auxiliary *may*, which marks the speaker’s inference, cannot occur in the LIC:

- (28) a. \*Down the hill may roll the baby carriage. (Coopmans (1989: 729))  
 b. \*Around the corner may be a kiosk, so you can get your film there.  
 (Shinzato (1996: 8-9))

Needless to say, this phenomenon is not the case in non-inverted counterparts:

- (29) a. The baby carriage may roll down the hill.  
 b. Around the corner there may be a kiosk, so you can get your film there.

The contrast between (28) and (29) also indicates that the LIC is not appropriate for expressing inference-based or conceptual information.

Thirdly, the fact that the LIC can be used neither in polar interrogative sentences (i.e. *yes/no*-questions) nor in negative sentences can be regarded as supporting evidence for my claim:

- (30) a. \*Did up the street trot the dog? (Hooper and Thompson (1973: 469))  
 b. \*On the wall never hung a picture of US Grant. (Aissen (1975: 9))

From a functional point of view, leaving syntactic issues aside, we can say that the purpose of using interrogative sentences is to ask about the truth or falsity of the thing in question. If the assumption that the LIC is specialized to convey information gained through the speaker's direct perception is correct, it stands to reason that the LIC cannot be used in interrogative sentences. It is meaningless to ask about the truth or falsity of one's own perception. The negative sentence in (30b) is also judged anomalous. As the word *never* denies the existence of the picture in question, it follows that the speaker denies the existence of what he saw.

In this way, the LIC contributes to the identification or distinction of an information source, specifically employed to express information gained through direct perception. The analysis developed here is convincing in that it can account for the question of why "natural habitats" (Webelhuth (2011: 99)) of the LIC are discourse contexts such as retrospective eye witness reports, play-by-play broadcasts of sporting events, route directions, and scenic narrative situations. The reason for this is that the LIC is an evidential expression: all of these contexts more or less involve a report of direct perceptual experience.

#### 4. Motivation: From the Perspective of a Constructional Network Approach Based on a Usage-Based Model

In the last section, I showed that the *raison d'être* of the LIC is the identification of information source, indicating direct (firsthand) evidentiality. This raises a new question. What motivates or underpins the evidential use of the LIC? To put it more precisely, what enables the LIC to specifically describe the speaker's direct perception? I will give a provisional answer to this question in terms of the constructional network between the LIC and the construction called the *Deictic Inversion Construction* (DIC), analyzed thoroughly in Lakoff (1987) under the name of the *Central Deictic Construction*.<sup>4</sup>

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4 I have chosen a new name, based on Webelhuth's (2011) terminology, to highlight the close relationship between the LIC and the DIC.

#### 4.1. A Dynamic Usage-Based Model

To answer the above-mentioned question, I assume that the LIC is based on or “extended from” the DIC in the sense of Langacker’s (1987, 2000) Dynamic Usage-Based Model (DUBM, for short). Here let us provide a brief overview of Langackerian DUBM.

Langackerian DUBM is one of the models of grammatical representation focusing on acts of language use.<sup>5</sup> In this framework, “substantial importance is given to the actual use of the linguistic system and a speaker’s knowledge of this use” (Langacker (1987: 494)). Thus, the structure of grammatical knowledge is assumed to be determined by such factors as *frequency* of use and *similarity* of form and meaning. The mental grammar of speakers is shaped by the repeated exposure to specific utterances; that is, the more often a (novel) linguistic unit is used, the more firmly established it becomes. As such, cognitive processes like categorization and comparison play crucial roles in the routinization or entrenchment (Langacker (1987, 2000)) of constructions, as a result of which elaborate networks of conventional units including constructional subschemas and instantiating expressions can be established, as illustrated below:

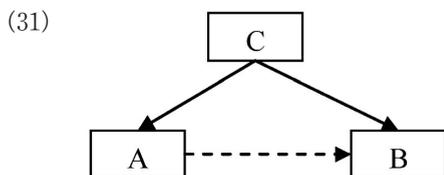


Figure (31) depicts a simple scheme of a network model. The broken arrow from A to B indicates that construction B is an extension of construction A, which means that B is perceived to be more or less similar to A. Construction C is schematic for both A and B in that it abstracts away from the specific differences between A and B. Thus, construction C schematizes constructions A and B, while constructions A and B instantiate construction C (for more details, see Langacker (2000)).

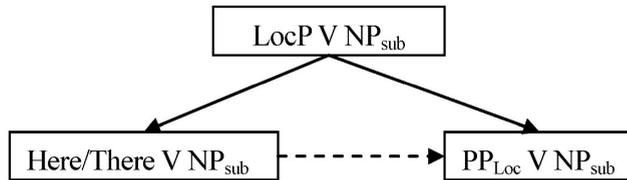
From the perspective of the DUBM, the network relationship between the LIC and the DIC can be represented as follows:

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5 According to Kemmer and Barlow (2000), various usage-based approaches, despite numerous differences in methodology and focus, share a number of fundamental assumptions like the following:

- (i) a. The intimate relation between linguistic structures and instances of use of language.
- b. The importance of frequency.
- c. Comprehension and production as integral, rather than peripheral, to the linguistic system.
- d. Focus on the role of learning and experience in language acquisition.
- e. Linguistic representations as emergent, rather than stored as fixed entities.
- f. Importance of usage data in theory construction and description.
- g. The intimate relation between usage, synchronic variation, and diachronic change.
- h. The interconnectedness of the linguistic system with non-linguistic cognitive systems.
- i. The crucial role of context in the operation of the linguistic system.

(32)



If the LIC is an extended construction of the DIC and thus the two constructions form a network like (32), it is quite natural to conclude that the evidential use of the LIC is motivated by and inherited through the network from the deictic use of the DIC.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4.2. Evidence: Grammatical and Functional Similarities between the Deictic and Locative Inversion Constructions

As mentioned above, the DUBM assumes that the similarity of form and meaning is an important factor in structuring grammatical knowledge. Thus, if the LIC is an extension of the DIC, then there should be some similarities between them. Let us confirm this prediction, investigating the basic characteristics of the DIC.

The following examples illustrate the DIC, taken from Lakoff (1987):

- (33) a. There's Harry with his red hat on.  
 b. Here comes Harry around the corner.

Basically, expressions like those exemplified in (33) are used “to direct hearer’s attention to something in the perceptual field of both speaker and hearer and to identify it with the expression given” (Lakoff (1987 : 481)). In other words, the DIC is employed to describe events unfolding before the speaker’s eyes at the time of speech. As such, it is incompatible with modifiers like *from time to time*, which is used to foreground a generic meaning:

- (34) \*Here comes Harry from time to time. (Lakoff (1987 : 471))

In this way, the DIC is felicitous or licensed if the speaker is talking about objects and events present in the region visually observable by the hearer.<sup>7</sup> Thus, a typical situation in which the DIC is used can be described as follows (where S and H stand for speaker and hearer respectively):

- (35) First:
- S knows that some object O is visible to both S and H in a region R close to the utterance situation;
  - S points at R to get H to visually scan R;
  - Simultaneously, S verbally refers to the property of being located in R by uttering the word *there* or *here*.

6 The existence of a “blended” or intermediate construction of the LIC and the DIC, i.e. the presentational deictic (e.g. *There in my favorite chair sat a fat man with a monocle* (Lakoff (1987 : 521)), suggests that the LIC and the DIC form a continuum.

7 As is the case with the LIC, the potential scope of the DIC is not limited to visual perception. It can describe auditory perception, as shown below (cf. Lakoff (1987)):

- (i) a. There goes the bell now!  
 b. There’s the beep.

Then:

- S verbalizes the remainder of the sentence;
- H processes the remainder of the sentence and is able to see the situation that is simultaneously described by S.

(Webelhuth (2011 : 90))

As can be inferred from (35), the DIC verbalizes speaker’s instantaneous perceptual experience and thus can be regarded as an evidential expression indicating that the information conveyed is gained through speaker’s direct perception. In fact, as is the case with the LIC, the DIC cannot be used in contexts like the following:

- (36) Inferential Information:
- a. \*Here comes Harry (, because our dog is barking).
  - b. \*There may go the bell.
- (37) Hearsay Information:
- A: What did Mary say?  
 B: \*There’s Harry with his red hat on.
- (38) *Yes/No*-Question:
- a. \*Does here come Harry?
  - b. \*Is there Harry with his red hat on?

As shown in (36)–(38), the DIC is in parallel with the LIC in that it is specialized for expressing the speaker’s direct perceptual experience.

In addition to the above-mentioned evidential characteristics, the combination of grammatical and usage properties of the LIC and the DIC can be summarized as follows (cf. Webelhuth (2011)):

(39) Properties of the LIC and DIC

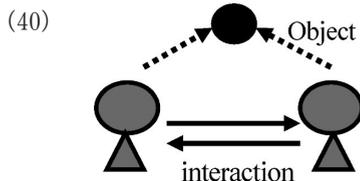
LIC	DIC
Unusual word order: [PP <sub>Loc</sub> Aux* V LOG-SUBJ]	Unusual word order: [ <i>there/here</i> Aux* V LOG-SUBJ]
The main verb must be intransitive.	The main verb must be intransitive.
The sentence must not be negated.	The sentence must not be negated.
The logical subject must not be an anaphoric pronoun.	The logical subject must not be an anaphoric pronoun.
The relative familiar constraint. <sup>8</sup>	The relative familiar constraint.
The “Displaced speech” effect. <sup>9</sup>	—

8 This constraint is formulated by Birner (1996 : 90) as follows: the preposed element in an inversion must not be newer in the discourse than the postposed element (see also Takami (1995)).

9 This effect means that LICs are used in situations where the speaker has privileged access to the situation to be communicated with the sentence; that is, the LIC is a description of what the speaker can see but the hearer/reader cannot (for more details, see Drubig (1988) and Webelhuth (2011)).

As this table shows, the LIC and the DIC are remarkably similar to each other grammatically and pragmatically.

Moreover, the LIC and the DIC are also in parallel with each other in terms of a psychological phenomenon known as *joint attention*, a simultaneous engagement of two or more individuals in mental focus on one and the same external thing. The following figure illustrates this point:



Joint attention is highly social because its goal is to share thoughts, ideas, memories, observations, and experiences with others. It helps the participants to share the meaning and construal of things they are paying attention to, which leads to the sharing of intention and emotion (cf. Honda (2011)).<sup>10</sup>

From the perspective of joint attention, it is worth noting here that the LIC and the DIC are used as devices of “focus management” (Dorgeloh (1997:105)), i.e. directing hearer’s/reader’s attention from one thing to another. Compare the following pair:

- (41) a. Jack opened the box. Inside was an antique man’s watch. (LIC)  
 b. (The speaker is pointing at where Harry is walking.) There goes Harry. (DIC)

Note that a cognitive process like the following is relevant to the interpretation of sentences such as those in (41). First, by using a locative phrase (and also by pointing at the region in question in the case of the DIC), the speaker directs the hearer’s attention to the perceptual field or space in which an entity exists. At this step, the speaker has succeeded in sharing and coordinating attention with the hearer; that is, joint attention is established between them. Second, by introducing the entity, the speaker directs the hearer’s focus from the space or region to the entity itself. Metaphorically, this process produces an effect as if the speaker “moved his camera closer” (Dorgeloh (1997:104)) or “zoomed in” (Yamanashi (2004:53)). Thus, both the LIC and the DIC are used as linguistic manifestation of joint attentional activities to direct or guide the hearer’s attention to newly introduced entities (see also Shizawa (2014)).

Lastly, the assumption that the LIC is an extension of the DIC is also corroborated from the perspective of children’s language acquisition, because deictic expressions are learned at an earlier stage than non-deictic expressions with the displaced speech effect. In fact, the DIC is colloquial and thus common in early child language (Tomasello (2003:103)), while the LIC is rather literary and thus common in narratives, as stated above.<sup>11</sup>

10 For detailed information about joint attention, see Moore and Dunhan (1995). See also Honda (2005, 2011) for analyses of a variety of linguistic expressions in terms of joint attention.

11 This is not to say that the LIC cannot be used deictically in conversations, though it is true that the LIC may sound rather pompous or poetic. In fact, the LIC can be used deictically as shown below :

## 5. Conclusion

In this article, I have made the following points. First, I have shown that the LIC indicates direct or firsthand evidentiality; that is, information conveyed by the LIC is gained from the speaker's direct perceptual experience. Second, from the perspective of Langackerian DUBM, I have argued that evidentiality marked by the LIC is motivated and "inherited" from the DIC on the basis of a network linking those two constructions.

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- (i) a. Among the guests of honor was sitting HER [pointing]. (Bresnan (1994 : 86))  
b. As you can see, across the street is a grocery. (= (27b))

If it is the case that the deictic use of the LIC is inherited from the DIC, the assumption that the LIC is extended from the DIC is further corroborated.

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