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## EVIDENTIAL ADVERBS EXPRESSING CERTAINTY IN ENGLISH AND POLISH

**Abstract.** The aim of this study is to examine the range of evidential adverbs of certainty in English and Polish, and to compare their syntactic and pragmatic properties in the two languages. Evidential adverbs express certainty as following from evidence. Since it has been argued that *evidence* is one of the key cultural concepts in modern English (cf. WIERZBICKA 2010), reference will also be made to the cultural underpinnings of this category of adverbs.

**Keywords:** adverbs; certainty; evidential; epistemic; English; Polish.

### 1. Introduction

Modal adverbs have received less scholarly attention than modal verbs, however, there are important studies which put English modal adverbs in a contrastive perspective with their Dutch, German, Swedish and French equivalents (e.g. NUYTS 2001, SIMON-VANDENBERGEN and AIJMER 2007). In English-Polish contrastive linguistics, this area remains considerably understudied. The aim of the present paper is to examine a relatively narrow group of such expressions, namely evidential adverbs of certainty, i.e. adverbs which express certainty as following from evidence. An attempt will be made to compare the range of such adverbs in English and Polish, and to analyze their syntactic and pragmatic properties in the two languages. The study is corpus based. The English material is taken from The British National Corpus (100 million words); the Polish examples come from the PWN corpus (40 million words) and the IPI PAN corpus (250 million words). Since *evidence* is considered to be one of the cultural key words in modern English, attention will also be paid to the cross-cultural aspects of the comparison.

## 2. Evidentiality and epistemic modality

The word *evidential* is often used ambiguously in studies related to modality. What is quite clear is that the concept of evidentiality is closely related to epistemic modality. Some linguists classify evidentiality as a type of epistemic modality, while others see epistemics as belonging with the non-modal category of evidential expressions (see PORTNER 2009: 167–168 for an overview of the two approaches). PALMER (2001: 8) writes about “evidential modality” and “epistemic modality” as separate notions, and considers them to be the subcategories of propositional modality, i.e. “modality concerned with the speaker’s attitude to the truth-value or factual status of the proposition”. However, he also notes that the two categories often rely on similar concepts, such as the concept of deduction: “deduction, as expressed by English MUST usually suggests that the judgement was based on evidence ... Thus *Kate must be at home* may be a judgement based on the observation that she is not in her office” (PALMER 2001: 8–9). Deduction, reported information, hearsay, direct evidence (visual or auditory) are notions which some epistemics share with evidentials (PORTNER 2009: 170), so it seems plausible that there are areas where the two categories overlap. PORTNER (2009: 172) argues that it is possible to claim that epistemic modals can function as evidentials when the term *evidential* is taken as a descriptive word rather than a theoretical term. While the uncertain status of evidentials is acknowledged in the present study, it is far beyond its scope to attempt any resolution to this problem. It is however important, as it affects the classifications of modal adverbs in English and Polish linguistics.

## 3. Evidential adverbs – definition

Adverbs of certainty can be grouped into several categories. SIMON-VANDENBERGEN and AIJMER (2007: 84), whose classification will be used here, distinguish four subcategories within this group of adverbs:

1. epistemic adverbs, which focus on the speaker’s own judgment of the reliability of truth: *certainly, definitely, undoubtedly, no doubt, indeed, surely, decidedly, for sure, for certain, assuredly, indubitably,*
2. evidential adverbs, which refer to certainty coming from available evidence: *clearly, evidently, manifestly, obviously, patently, plainly,*
3. expectation adverbs, which relate the speaker’s expectations to the state of affairs: *of course, inevitably, naturally, necessarily,*
4. speech act adverbs, which refer to speech acts which could potentially be used to support the speaker’s opinion or raise voices against his/her point of view, e.g. *avowedly, admittedly, arguably, incontestably, incontrovertibly, indisputably, unarguably, unquestionably, undeniably.*

Evidential adverbs seem to be particularly interesting from the cross-linguistic perspective because they refer to a notion (*evidence*) which has been regarded as one of the key concepts in contemporary English (see WIERZBICKA 2010). Differences between the cultural heritage of English and Polish suggest that this category of adverbs is likely to be realized differently in the two languages.

In recent publications of Polish linguists (e.g. TUTAK 2003, DANIELEWICZOWA 2008) evidential adverbs tend to be treated as a subcategory of epistemic adverbs on the assumption that they refer to the speaker's knowledge. However, no specific term is used to name the category; it is only introduced in descriptive terms, and only some examples of such adverbs are discussed. Earlier publications (e.g. GRZEGORCZYKOWA 1975, BRALCZYK 1978) tend to focus on the degree of certainty expressed by adverbs, and also refer to evidentials descriptively, without assigning any specific names to this category of adverbs. DANIELEWICZOWA (2008: 49) notices a number of methodological problems connected with the classification of epistemic adverbs, and suggests that perhaps a more general term should be used to refer to the whole category and the term *epistemic* could be reserved for a more specific group containing such adverbs as *przypuszczalnie* (Eng. 'presumably') and *niewątpliwie* (Eng. 'undoubtedly'). The examples of adverbs which refer to the sources of the speaker's knowledge which she uses include *wyraźnie, najwyraźniej, jawnie, rzekomo, podobno*. TUTAK (2003: 126–128) discusses such evidentials as *widać, widocznie, najwidoczniej, najwyraźniej* and the archaic *snać*.

#### 4. Evidential adverbs in English

Of the six English evidential adverbs listed above, *clearly* and *obviously* appear to be the most frequent; the others are significantly less common. Their frequencies in the British National Corpus are summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1. English evidential adverbs of certainty

adverb	Frequency in the BNC (100 million words)
<i>clearly</i>	14 767
<i>most clearly</i>	226
<i>evidently</i>	1 422
<i>most evidently</i>	2
<i>manifestly</i>	198
<i>most manifestly</i>	1

adverb	Frequency in the BNC (100 million words)
<i>obviously</i>	10 533
<i>most obviously</i>	125
<i>patently</i>	214
<i>most patently</i>	0
<i>plainly</i>	704
<i>most plainly</i>	5

The figures presented in Table 1 suggest that *clearly* is the most frequent evidential adverb in English, however, it is not necessarily the case. *Clearly* and *plainly* have both evidential and non-evidential uses, while *evidently*, *obviously*, *manifestly*, and *patently* tend to be used as exclusively as evidentials.<sup>1</sup> SIMON-VANDENBERGEN and AIJMER's (2007:162) data suggest that even though the evidential use of *clearly* is more frequent than its non-evidential use (the ratio in their corpus being 114: 66), the most frequent evidential adverb is in fact *obviously* (226 occurrences in their corpus). In the present study, no attempt has been made to analyze all the occurrences of *clearly* to separate its two uses, but the analysis of its 50 random occurrences, 40 of which were found to be evidential, confirms that the evidential use is more common. The non-evidential uses of both *clearly* and *plainly* refer to modes of thinking, remembering, seeing or speaking, as in:

- (1) FEE 997 Now I was thinking *clearly* and coldly.
- (2) CBY 436 'BCCI has emphasised how vital it is that auditors should speak *plainly* and freely to the Bank,' Chancellor Norman Lamont said.

SIMON-VANDENBERGEN and AIJMER (2007:171) observe that in the case of *plainly* it is often difficult to distinguish between the two uses, as the adverb primarily refers to visual perception which then leads to mental perception. They write: "the fact that the two meanings cannot be separated follows from the semantics of the adverb itself: if something is done, if a process takes place in a manner which is perceptible, then by subjectification the speaker can utter that it was clear, thus certain to him/her" (SIMON-VANDENBERGEN and AIJMER 2007:171). The superlative forms *most clearly* and *most plainly* also have both evidential and non-evidential uses, but here, the non-evidential uses seem to prevail. *Most plainly* has only 5 occurrences in the BNC, one of which is unambiguously evidential. *Most clearly* is more frequent (226 occurrences), but

<sup>1</sup> SIMON-VANDENBERGEN and AIJMER (2007: 147–148) note that *obviously* used to have non-evidential uses as well, originally meaning 'by the way', and later 'in a clear perceptible manner'. Such uses are however infrequent in contemporary English.

out of the 50 random cases of *most clearly* studied here only 3 were evidential, while in the other ones *most clearly* was used as an adverb of manner. Thus, the evidential use appears to be more characteristic of the positive degree of the two adverbs. The superlative forms of all the adverbs analyzed are significantly less common than their positive degrees. The uses of English evidential adverbs are illustrated in the examples below:

- (3) AN3 1172 *Clearly*, it is cheaper for them to operate like this because they do not have regular wage bills to pay.
- (4) APU 1169 The old woman scarcely said a word and betrayed no emotion, although Martha felt an obscure sense of triumph and her mother was *plainly* anxious to leave as fast as possible.
- (5) CAP 693 Yet it is *plainly* obvious to anyone who works in central London, or has tried to get admission to hospital there, that this is untrue.
- (6) FR5 2220 I seen one woman and she had a police uniform on, so *obviously* I knew it was the police.
- (7) ANX 465 The difference between genius and madness is *patently* obvious.
- (8) AP7 1683 He was *evidently* an ingenious man, and after retiring from the smithy would earn from carpentry:
- (9) ABM 1586 It is '*manifestly* impossible there should be any such idea', for we can have no sensory experience of spirits.

Evidential adverbs are typically used in two syntactic functions: (1) as disjuncts in clause-initial positions, (2) as modifiers in adjective phrases. The less frequent adverbs, i.e. *manifestly*, *patently*, *plainly* are often used to modify evidential adjectives (e.g. *patently obvious*, *plainly obvious*, *manifestly evident*). Reference to the evidence on which the speaker's conclusion is based is often explicit and introduced with the conjunctions *because*, *for* or *so*, as in (3), (6) and (9) above, though there are cases where there is no explicit reference to the source of the speaker's knowledge, and only the presence of an evidential adverb suggests that it is based on some evidence, as illustrated in (4) and (7).

## 5. Evidential adverbs in Polish

As already mentioned, evidential adverbs used in Polish do not appear to have been described as a distinct category. The examples discussed by Polish scholars (see section 3. above) include *wyraźnie*, *najwyraźniej*, *jawnie*, *widocznie*, and *najwidoczniej*. English-Polish dictionaries (e.g. COLLINS 1996, STANISŁAWSKI 1999) provide more equivalents of English evidential adverbs. *Clearly* is translated as *wyraźnie*, *najwyraźniej*, *oczywiście*, *najoczywiściej*, *bezsparnie*, *najwidoczniej*; *evidently* as *najwyraźniej*; *ewidentnie*; *obviously* as *wyraźnie*, *najwyraźniej*, *oczywiście*; *patently* as *ewidentnie*; *plainly* as *wyraźnie*. They do not

provide any Polish equivalents of *manifestly*. Thus, based on these dictionaries, Polish equivalents of English evidential adverbs include: *wyraźnie*, *najwyraźniej*, *oczywiście*, *najoczywiściej*, *ewidentnie*, *najwidoczniej*, and *bezspornie*. However, this list is clearly both inadequate and incomplete. It contains two adverbs which are non-evidential: *bezspornie* and *oczywiście*, but it omits to include the evidential adverb *widocznie*. *Bezspornie* refers to the speaker's own conviction, and as such it can be classified as an epistemic adverb. It could be rendered in English as *indisputably*, *unarguably*, or *unquestionably*, as the example below demonstrates:

- (10) Całościowa analiza akt dokonana przeze mnie wczoraj ... w moim przekonaniu wykazuje *bezspornie*, że ... osoba przesłuchiwana przez komisję wcześniej zeznała nieprawdę (IPI PAN) (Eng. 'A thorough analysis of the records which I conducted yesterday shows unquestionably that a person interrogated by the commission had lied')

*Oczywiście*, in turn, is an expectation adverb which corresponds to English *of course* and *naturally*. The following examples from the Polish corpora illustrate its use quite well:

- (11) *Oczywiście* bardzo zależało mi, żeby wnuczek miał zdjęcia z dziadkami. (PWN) (Eng. 'Naturally I thought it important for the grandson to have some pictures with his grandparents.')
- (12) Czy masz prawo do wycofania swoich pieniędzy przed przejściem na emeryturę? – Tak, *oczywiście*. (PWN) (Eng. 'Is it possible to withdraw your money before you retire? – Yes, of course.')

Thus, the most common evidential adverbs of certainty used in Polish seem to include the following: *wyraźnie*, *najwyraźniej*, *ewidentnie*, *najoczywiściej*, *widocznie*, *najwidoczniej*, and *jawnie*.<sup>2</sup> Their frequencies in the PWN corpus of Polish are summarized in Table 2 below:

**Table 2. Polish evidential adverbs of certainty**

adverb	Frequency in the PWN corpus (40 million words)	Frequency per 100 million words
<i>wyraźnie</i>	2 778	6 945
<i>najwyraźniej</i>	567	1 417
<i>ewidentnie</i>	91	227
<i>najoczywiściej</i>	10	25

<sup>2</sup> The superlative forms *najewidentniej* and *najjawniej* are not attested in the two electronic corpora used in the present study, so they will be excluded from the analysis.

adverb	Frequency in the PWN corpus (40 million words)	Frequency per 100 million words
<i>widocznie</i>	856	2 140
<i>najwidoczniej</i>	142	355
<i>jawnie</i>	177	442

Overall, their frequencies are noticeably lower than the frequencies of evidential adverbs in English, but the superlative forms seem to be used more often in Polish, and they are more likely to be perceived as adverbs in their own right, independent from their positive degrees. This tendency is well illustrated by the superlative form *najoczywiściej*, which, unlike the its positive degree *oczywiście*, appears to be used as an evidential adverb, as in:

- (13) Była to *najoczywiściej* przyjezdna – z miasta czy z daleka – ... gdyż w sposób wielkomięjski wszystkiemu się dziwiła (IPI PAN) (Eng. ‘She was evidently/clearly a newcomer – from the city or from far away – ... as she reacted to everything with amazement, the way city dwellers do.’)
- (14) 100 lat temu ... rządy zaczęły wydawać zgodę na działanie związków zawodowych – i legalizować tzw. ‘strajki’. Była to *najoczywiściej* szkodliwa zmiana Prawa... ...co widać dzisiaj (IPI PAN) (Eng. ‘A hundred years ago ... governments began to allow trade unions to function, and to legalize so called ‘strikes’. It was clearly a harmful decision ..., as the current situation shows.’)

Both (13) and (14) contain references to the evidence on which the speaker’s conclusion is based, which is typical of both English and Polish evidentials.

Of the Polish evidential adverbs discussed here, only *widocznie* and *najwidoczniej* appear to be used exclusively as evidentials, while the other ones have both evidential and non-evidential uses. (15) and (16) bellow exemplify the use of *widocznie* and *najwidoczniej*:

- (15) W miastach małych (Strzegom, Oława i Dzierżoniów) mniej jest zwolenników weekendu. Mniej jest *widocznie* odczuwana potrzeba wyjazdu za miasto w miastach małych. (PWN) (Eng. ‘People living in small towns such as Strzegom, Oława and Dzierżoniów go away for weekends less often. Clearly, the need to spend a weekend away from the town is less strong in small towns.’)
- (16) Profesor oświadczył przy śniadaniu, że *najwidoczniej* Bóg sprzyja ich przedsięwzięciu, ponieważ trudno wyobrazić sobie lepsze miejsce na początek ich kolokwiów niż znajdujący się nieopodal dolmen, upamiętniony w wierszu polskiego poety romantycznego. (IPI PAN) (Eng. ‘At breakfast, the professor said that God was clearly favourable towards them, as it is difficult to imagine a better place to begin their classes than the nearby dolmen commemorated in a poem by a Polish romantic poet.’)

The non-evidential uses of *wyraźnie*, *najwyraźniej*, and *evidentnie* are illustrated in:

- (17) Oto moja rada: posłać do nieprzyjaciela notę, że wojny nie chcemy, żeby powiedział *wyraźnie*, o co mu chodzi. (PWN) (Eng. 'My advice is as follows: we should send a note to our enemy saying that we do not want a war. We should ask him to say clearly what it is that he wants.')
- (18) Rozrost policyjnej biurokracji *najwyraźniej* widać w Komendzie Głównej. (IPI PAN) (Eng. 'The increased bureaucracy in police forces is most clearly visible in the National Police Headquarters.')
- (19) W tych dwóch elementach, dostrzeganych *evidentnie* w postawie Jezusa, można widzieć Jego zbliżenie do postawy wiary. (IPI PAN) (Eng. 'These two elements, which can clearly be seen in Jesus' behavior, illustrate his attitude to faith.')

Their evidential uses are exemplified in (20), (21) and (22) below. Like in English, Polish evidential adverbs modify adjectives, e.g. *wyraźnie niezadowolony* in (20), however, they do not seem to modify evidential adjectives the way English evidential adverbs do.

- (20) Farmer powitał ich chłodno, z widocznym niesmakiem. Był *wyraźnie niezadowolony* z przybycia tego gangstera. (IPI PAN) (Eng. 'The farmer greeted them coldly, with a visible distaste. He was clearly unhappy about the arrival of that gangster.')
- (21) Zimny powiew padający od obrotowych drzwi musiał jej *najwyraźniej* nie służyć, bo pociągała co chwilę zaczerwienionym nosem. (PWN) (Eng. 'The cold breath from the revolving door was clearly not doing her good, as she kept sniffing her red nose.')
- (22) Z naszych ustaleń wynika, że postępowanie PKN *evidentnie* prowadziło do likwidacji konkurencji. Koncern zarobił w ostatnich trzech latach na zawyżaniu cen glikolu 14 mln zł. (PWN) (Eng. 'We have established that PKN has evidently acted in a way which enabled them to eliminate their competitors. During the last three years, the consortium made a lot of money by overestimating the price of glycol.')

The tendency of most evidential adverbs to be also used as non-evidentials illustrates how close the two uses are. As SIMON-VANDENBERGEN and AIJMER (2007) observe, evidential adverbs have originated as adverbs of manner; their evidential meanings have developed later. The closeness of the two functions of such adverbs is well visible in the case of *jawnie*, which in some instances, much like English *plainly*, seems to be ambiguous between evidential and non-evidential uses. As an adverb of manner it is used to mean 'overtly, openly, in public' (STANISŁAWSKI 1999), as in:

- (23) Ja przemawiałem *jawnie* przed światem. (PWN) (Eng. 'I spoke openly to the world')



Its evidential use is illustrated in:

- (24) Pojęcie Boga było u niego *jawnie* gnostyckie, jako że przyjmował on dualizm, przeciwstawiając Bogu złemu Starego Testamentu Boga dobrego Nowego Testamentu. (PWN) (Eng. 'His notion of God was clearly Gnostic, as he accepted the duality of God, juxtaposing the bad God of the Old Testament with the good God of the New Testament.')

However, in (25) below its meaning is more ambiguous:

- (25) Podkreślano zgodnie, że zerwanie z ND odbyło się w związku z niechęcią robotników NZR-owców do jej polityki *jawnie* ugodowej i procarskiej. (PWN) (Eng. 'It was generally agreed that breaking with ND was connected with the unwillingness of NZR workers' to accept her politics which was ev-idently/openly conciliatory and pro-tzar.')

The findings obtained in the present study seem to allow a tentative suggestion that Polish evidentials are more likely to have non-evidential uses than their English counterparts. However, this observation needs to be verified by further research.

TUTAK (2003) argues that the use of evidential adverbs by the speaker suggests that s/he is not willing to take the full responsibility for the truth value of his/her statement. The speaker is not entirely certain that the evidence s/he has at his/her disposal is sufficient to make the statement. It is thus the speaker's strategy of securing himself or herself against the responsibility for the conclusion s/he is making. TUTAK (2003: 128) also suggests that the use of evidential adverbs and the accompanying explicit references to evidence made by the speaker invite the addressee to make his/her own conclusions about a problem. Such strategies seem to be consistent with the traits of Anglo culture discussed by WIERZBICKA (2006, 2010), i.e. as the respect for the autonomy of the addressee and the respect for facts and evidence. It seems likely that the frequent use of evidential adverbs in English and the less frequent use of such expressions in Polish correlate with the cultural patterns of the two language communities.

## 6. Evidence as a cultural key-word

The notion of *evidence*, which evidential adverbs rely on, is, as WIERZBICKA (2010) argues, one of the cultural key-words in modern English, i.e. words which are particularly revealing about its cultural heritage. She writes: "In many domains, it is almost impossible to engage in a serious discussion in English without drawing on it at some point ... there is in present-day English a whole rich discourse based on the word *evidence* and its collocations. In particular, discus-

sions, debates, and polemical exchanges often hinge on the use of this crucial and ... uniquely English concept” (WIERZBICKA 2010: 94–95). *Evidence* and other culturally significant words rooted in the philosophy of the British Enlightenment, e.g. *exactly*, *experience* and *fact*, reflect the Anglo-American ideal of accuracy and precision of speech. This ideal goes back to the works of empirical philosophers, such as John Locke, who emphasized the importance of acknowledging the limitations of one’s knowledge, as well as to the English common law with its system of jurors relying on facts and evidence in forming their opinions (SHAPIRO 2000, WIERZBICKA 2006). The frequent use of the word *evidence* in English, and the high frequency of colloquial expressions deriving from scientific discourse, such as *not exactly* and *in fact* illustrate the prestige of scientific ways of speaking and the importance of empirical philosophy in Anglo-American culture (cf. WIERZBICKA 2006: 34).

Empirical philosophy has been less influential in Poland, where the ideals of Baroque and Romanticisms have played a more important role (HRYNIEWICZ 2004). Both Baroque and Romanticism gave priority to feelings, emotions, and spontaneity. Such an intellectual climate favoured speech patterns based on *honesty* and *truth* rather than *facts* and *evidence* (cf. ROZUMKO forthcoming), hence, perhaps, the lower frequency of evidentials in Polish.

## 7. Conclusions

Evidential adverbs of certainty appear to have been more thoroughly described in Anglophone literature; in Polish linguistics they have not been studied systematically as a distinct category. They seem to be used more frequently in English than in Polish, which may perhaps be attributed to the importance of the concept of evidence in Anglo-American culture. Modal adverbs in general constitute an exceptionally rich and frequent category in English (WIERZBICKA 2006). The frequent use of such adverbs is one of the manifestations of the Anglo emphasis on limitations of one’s knowledge, and the resulting need for understatement and indirectness in expressing opinions and making claims. The most frequent evidential adverbs in English are *obviously* and *clearly*. In Polish *widocznie* and *wyraźnie* seem to be the most common. In both languages, the evidence which such adverbs rely on may be stated explicitly or merely implied. One of the most characteristic differences between the uses of evidential adverbs in the two languages is that in Polish their superlative forms are more common than in English; their uses and meanings are also sometimes distinct and independent from the positive degree forms. Most of the observations and conclusions offered in the present study are only tentative. They do suggest certain areas of difference between English and Polish evidentials, but they need to be verified by more extensive research.

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