

Ignorance of epistemological distance: rhetorical use of non-evidentials in the work of Franz Kafka

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In a face to face communication, it is normal that the speaker says what he or she thinks, like (1) below. It is however somewhat absurd that the speaker utters what the interlocutor thinks, like (2).

(1) I think that her abstract will be accepted.

(2) You think that her abstract will be accepted.

Utterance (2) is surely grammatical¹, but it seems to be strange pragmatically because it expresses to the interlocutor's face categorically what he or she thinks although it is epistemologically impossible for the speaker to know directly what the other thinks except the narrator in literary texts. However, it should be possible if (2) is expressed in interrogative form or with evidentials, like (3) or (4).

(3) Do you think that her abstract will be accepted?

(4) You seem to think that her abstract will be accepted.

In (3) and (4), evidentiality is considered. But the following is an utterance without any evidentials:

“You think you have strength enough to come over here and that you're only hanging back of your own accord.” (Franz Kafka: *The Judgment*)

In the utterance a speaker expresses verbally what he sees through the mind of his interlocutor. It seems to ignore the personal epistemological distance between the speaker and the hearer. In Kafka's novels, however, such utterances are observed occasionally and seem to have particular functions to the interlocutor. They can be called “seeing-through utterances” because the speaker expresses verbally what he or she sees through the mind of the interlocutor (Nishijima, 2005). Then, it can be hypothesized that “seeing-through utterances are rhetorically used in order for the speakers to display their certain attitudes to their interlocutors. The aim of the present paper is threefold: (a) to analyze some seeing-through utterances from several works of Franz Kafka, (b) to demonstrate that they are used rhetorically to display power or empathy of the speaker toward the interlocutor, and (c) to compare “seeing-through utterances” in German with their translations into the languages constrained by evidentiality like Japanese. The analysis of seeing-through utterances can be expected to come to light on a new rhetorical aspect of the fictional conversations in the work of Franz Kafka and focus on problems in their translations.

References

- Kafka, Franz. (1988). *The Collected Short Stories of Franz Kafka*. Ed. by Nahum N. Glatzer. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988.
- Nishijima, Yoshinori. (2005). Durchschauende Äußerung im Dialog von Kafkas Werken. In: *Studies in Stylistics*, 51, 2005, 13-24.

¹ The Japanese corresponding like (2)' below is not grammatical because of the person restriction on the subject of verbs of thinking in Japanese:

(2)' anata-wa kanojo-no abstract-ga saitaku-sareru to kangaeru.
You TOP she GEN abstract NOM accept-PASS COMP think

Therefore, the original sentence is expected to be translated rhetorically or freely, e.g. as in confirmation in the case where the person restriction is concerned.