

SAYC/CICĂ IN ROMANIAN BETWEEN EVIDENTIALITY AND REPORTED SPEECH

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Abstract. The paper aims to offer a comprehensive view of the uses of a specific reporting strategy in Romanian, known in the literature as SayC. SayC (*cică* in Romanian) designates a marker obtained via grammaticalization, following the fusion of a verb of saying (*a zice* ‘say’) with the declarative complementizer *că*. We focus on its reporting (verbal) properties, as opposed to its purely ‘reportative-evidential’ valences. The motivation behind this is that while the use of SayC/*cică* as an (adverbial) evidential marker is widely acknowledged (Cruschina and Remberger 2008, Remberger 2015, Zafiu 2020a, Sava 2021, Popescu 2023, a.o.), less attention has been given to a) its verbal uses as a defective *verbum dicendi* introducing not only direct speech (i.e., quotative), but also indirect and free indirect speech and to b) the exact (syntactic and interpretational) differences between the reportative-evidential *cică* and its reporting (verbal) counterpart. The ambivalence of Romanian SayC is backed by the results of a questionnaire with over 200 respondents. We also propose a series of tests aimed to tease apart the two valences of Romanian *cică*.

Keywords: evidentiality, quotative, reported speech, reportative strategy, hearsay, SayC, Romanian.

1. INTRODUCTION. BRIEFLY ON (INDIRECT) EVIDENTIALITY

Evidentiality is widely defined as “a linguistic category whose primary meaning is *source of information*” (Aikhenvald 2004: 3). By evidential modality speakers indicate the *evidence* they have for the factual status of the proposition (Rothstein 2010: 3). As such, unlike epistemic modality, which is concerned with judgements by an individual anchor (typically, the speaker) and his/her varying degrees of certainty with respect to a proposition, evidentiality is concerned with indicating the source of information – and, of course, setting up a typology thereof. There are languages where the nature of the evidence must be specified for every statement – that is, whether the speaker saw it, heard it, inferred it from indirect evidence or learned it from someone else. (cf. Aikhenvald 2004, 2018). While not all languages mark evidentiality as a grammatical category (i.e., via verbal inflections or clitics), every language has some way of making reference to the source of information for a given statement.

Regardless of whether evidentiality is encoded in the grammar or not, a typical evidential system generally distinguishes between two broad sub-categories: direct

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evidence and indirect evidence. Direct evidentials are used when the speaker has some sort of sensory evidence (most often than not visual). Indirect evidentials, on the other hand – which are of interest in the present paper – are used when the speaker was not a direct witness to the event, but learned of it afterwards. The speaker therefore merely reports (about) the event, i.e., passes on information obtained from other sources (including hearsay). Such reports thus represent a way to mitigate responsibility with respect to the event denoted by the proposition.

Willett (1988: 96) distinguishes three subtypes of ‘reported’ evidence (i.e., evidence via verbal report), as illustrated in (1) below:

- (1) a. **second-hand** evidence (**hearsay**): “the speaker claims to have heard of the situation described from someone who was a direct witness” (“he says”)
- b. third-hand evidence (**hearsay**): the speaker claims to have heard about the situation described, but not from a direct witness (“I heard”, “I hear tell”, “it is said”, “they say” (impersonal))
- c. **folklore**: the speaker claims that the situation described is part of established oral history (fairy tales, mythology, oral literature, proverbs and sayings)

Cruschina and Remberger (2008: 107) build on the above to set up their own (slightly refined) typology (see (2)), which we will also borrow and use in the present paper.

- (2) I. **second-hand**
 - Ia. **direct** reported speech
 - Ib. **indirect** reported speech
- II. **third-hand**
 - IIa. **non-specified**
 - IIb. **folklore**
- III. Labelling
- IV. dubitative

The typology illustrated in (2) allows for a better and clearer understanding of terms such as ‘quotative’, ‘reported’ and ‘repor(ta)tive’. In the present paper, we use these terms as explained below. *Quotative* designates situations when the exact words of the original speaker are quoted verbatim. This corresponds to (Ia) above and is, as such, only marginally evidential. We use ‘reported’ (or ‘reported speech’) for second-hand indirect speech (as well as free indirect speech) reports of the type “*s/he says/said that...*”, where the initial author is acknowledged. This is similar to Cruschina and Remberger’s (2008) (Ib). Finally, ‘reportative (evidentiality)’ refers to pure evidential strategies corresponding to (IIa) above. In such cases, the propositional content is signaled not to come from the actual speaker, but as belonging to some unspecified source either left unidentified or signaled as myth, belief or folklore.

Let us now turn to Romanian. Like its Western ‘sisters’, Romanian does not mark evidentiality in its verbal system. While it lacks specific evidential inflection, it displays a large array of evidential *strategies* which can be used to indicate the source of information: specific

(perception) verbs, adverbs, and various modal and temporal forms (such as the presumptive and the conditional). However, as it is the case with other Romance languages, the development of evidential strategies into evidential markers is not rare – SayC being a case in point.

Before we move on, let us make one last brief remark on the distinction between reported speech and evidentiality. There is still discussion in the literature about the exact relation that holds between reported speech proper and the category of evidentiality. Should the former be considered as part of the (larger) category of evidentiality or vice-versa? And what degree of overlap is there between the two? While there are clear differences between the two regarding (at least) the specification of the source of information (and whether or not it is part of the propositional content of the utterance), both terms deal with a similar concept, i.e., information non-attributable to the current speaker. The present paper does not have anything to contribute to this debate. In as much as both concepts refer to a particular type of evidence that a speaker has for their factual claims, we hold that they pertain to the overall field of evidentiality.

The paper is organized as follows: *Section 1* is the Introduction, where the concept of evidentiality is briefly discussed, both more generally as well as focusing on (the typology of) indirect evidentiality. After a brief *Section 2* which offers a bit of background on the SayC strategy and an overview of our present claims, an extensive *Section 3* proceeds with discussing the tests we propose to sift adverbial from verbal valences, supporting evidence for the verbal behaviour of SayC/cică and the results of a speaker-judgement questionnaire. *Section 4* draws the conclusions.

2. A BIT OF BACKGROUND ON SAYC IN ROMANIAN

As already mentioned, SayC refers to those instances – not unique to Romanian – where a former verb of saying (*a zice* ‘say’) has been phonetically reduced and merged with its complementizer (*că*), giving rise, via grammaticalization, to an evidential marker signaling that the source of evidence or information for a proposition is not the actual speaker, but someone else. For more on the exact details of the grammaticalization path, we prompt the reader to Cruschina and Remberger (2008: 99), Remberger 2015, and some discussion in Sava 2021.

Cruschina and Remberger (2008) is a crucial study on the grammaticalization patterns and different manifestations of SayC markers in several Romance varieties, including Romanian. We discuss here three main points that the authors make with respect to *cică* in Romanian, the first of which we agree with and use as starting point, the other two which we take issue with. The authors claim that the grammaticalization of SayC in Romanian, unlike in other varieties, is not complete and it “has not lost its verbal features entirely” (2008:104). This is precisely what feeds our own claim that *cică* in Romanian displays an ambivalent nature, both verbal (similar to a (defective) reporting verb) and adverbial (evidential). They also state that in cases when there is an explicit source of information “*cică* does not appear in the same clause with the given source” (2008:104). This will be shown not to be the case, via numerous naturally-occurring examples. Moreover, the authors also contend that “*cică* cannot appear as a direct discourse marker (Ia), neither with an overt nor with an implicit subject” (2008: 109). This, again, is not on the right track.

- (4) a. Cică Ion e bolnav.
 SAYC John be.pres.3sg ill
 ‘Apparently John is ill.’
 b. Ion cică e bolnav.
 John SAYC be.impf.3sg ill
 ‘As for John, apparently he is ill.’ (Cruschina and Remberger 2008: 111)

Notice that the two examples differ in word order – namely, the placement of the SayC marker (in sentence-initial position in (4a) and after the proper noun subject in (4b)). For (4a), the authors claim that *cică* is a high adverb which takes the whole clause under its scope and argue that it represents “the unmarked word order, which can be altered for discourse-related purposes”, i.e., (4b), where the noun *John* has been topicalized and thus no longer falls within the scope of SayC. Notwithstanding such differences (discursive in nature – for the two authors), “the propositional meaning of the sentence pairs is the same [...] SAYC simply means that someone said that John is ill, but it does not specify the source of this information”. Note that this is also evident from the translation of the examples.

Upon closer inspection, however, our contention is that the two examples above are not minimal pairs – or not perfect ones. The word order in (4a), with SayC/*cică* in sentence initial position, illustrates, indeed, the reportative-evidential use of *cică* (IIa), in that it unambiguously reports the proposition that ‘John is sick’ as taken (heard) from an unknown source. By contrast, (4b), featuring a proper noun subject in front of *cică*, is actually ambiguous between a reportative-evidential (IIa) and a reported speech reading (Ib). That is, it *may* mean either the same as (4a) (i.e., ‘*Allegedly/They say that/It is said that [John is sick]*’), or ‘*John says/said that he is sick*’, where *John* itself is the agent of saying (the expressed anchor of information). This claim is supported not only by several tests (see 3.1), but also by the results of a questionnaire administered to over 200 native speakers (3.3). We detail both in what follows.

3.1. Tests meant to check for verbal vs adverbial behaviour

The first type of proof that the position of SayC/*cică* in the structure is not random, but may correlate with different interpretations, is the relative freedom of the marker. Thus, reportative-evidential SayC is free to occur in several positions in the sentence, including in final position and in between commas, as shown in (5a))². This reflects its syntactic behaviour as a parenthetical adverb able to adjoin to the left of any constituent (rather than as a head of a dedicated position in the left periphery, cf. Sava 2021). Of all these available positions, only the non-parenthetical one in between the subject noun and the verbal phrase *a plecat* ‘has left’³ (*cică*₂) allows for a second reading where SayC corresponds to a reporting verb, as illustrated in (5b). This use therefore has a syntactically fixed distribution, with the preceding noun functioning as the agent (the external argument) of saying and the expressed source of evidence. As such, (5b) can be taken to represent the indirect speech variant of (5c), which features a direct speech complement clause (see the colon, the quotation marks and the use of the indexical 1st person pronoun ‘I’).

- (5) a. (Cică₁) Maria (cică₂) / (,cică₃) a plecat deja (,cică₄).
 SayC Maria SayC SayC has left already SayC
 ‘Allegedly, Mary has already left.’

² The sentence final position, after a comma (illustrated by *cică*₄ in (5a)) may also be associated with a pragmatic effect on speaker-stance, namely disbelief or doubt – i.e., *Allegedly Mary has left (but I very much doubt that)*. We do not discuss these uses here.

³ Which – in the verbal reading of SayC – is actually part of a truncated complement clause whose selector is precisely *cică*, functioning as a *verbum dicendi* in a main clause (see below for more details).

- b. Maria cică a plecat deja.
 Maria SayC has left already
(intended) ‘Mary says/said that she has already left.’
- c. Maria cică: “(Eu) Am plecat deja!”
 Maria SayC: (I) have left already
 ‘Mary says/said/is/was like: *I’ve already left!*’

A second test is the type of construction that SayC appears in, namely whether we are dealing with a mono- or a bi-clausal structure. (5a) represents a mono-clausal structure whose proposition (*‘Mary has already left’*) falls entirely within the scope of the reportative-evidential adverbial. So, in this reading, Mary is the subject of leaving, and in case it gets displaced to the left of SayC via topicalization, it remains so (i.e., she is still a “leaver”, not a “sayer” – the source of information being left unspecified (cf. Ila in (2))). Conversely, under the intended reading, (5b) represents a bi-clausal structure, where SayC functions as a (defective) *verbum dicendi* with its own argument structure: an external argument (a [+ person] noun as the specified source of evidence) and a (reduced) clausal internal argument whose clausal nature is backed by the fact that the quote in (5c) is visibly a full-fledged clause.

An immediate consequence of this is whether a second subject noun can appear in the structure. This is obviously possible only in reported speech uses like (5b), where the leftmost noun is the subject of saying and the complement clause may feature its own subjects, either lexicalized (6a) or *pro* (implicit, co-referent with the matrix subject or not) (6b, c).

- (6) a. Maria cică [soră-sa /frate-său a plecat deja.]
 Maria SayC sister-hers/brother-hers has left already
 ‘Maria says/said (that) her sister/her brother has already left.’
- b. [Am întrebat-o_i pe Maria_i unde e soră_j-sa] și Maria_i cică
 [I asked Maria where is her sister] and Maria SayC
 [a plecat *pro_j* deja]
 has left already
 ‘I asked Maria where her sister_j was] and she/Maria said that
 (she_j) had already left.’
- c. [Am sunat-o_i să văd unde e și] Maria_i cică [a plecat *pro_i* deja]
 [I called to see where she_i was and] Maria_i SayC has left already
 ‘I called her to see where she was and Maria_i said (that) she_i had
 already left.’

Merger of a second subject noun is clearly impossible with reportative uses of SayC (7), since these are mono-clausal structures where the adverb takes the entire single proposition under its scope, and only one external argument is allowed per predication,

- (7) a. *Cică Maria soră-sa a plecat deja.
 SayC Maria sister-hers has left already
- b. *Maria a plecat soră -sa deja, cică.
 Maria has left sister-hers already, SayC

A further test to tease the two valences apart is to look at co-occurrence and scope taking properties with other evidential adverbs like *parcă* 'seemingly'. This is expectedly ruled out with reportative-adverbial *cică* on semantic grounds (8a), but allowed with verbal *cică* (8b), in which case *parcă* takes narrow scope over the embedded proposition (i.e., it belongs to the propositional content of the initial speaker, not of the actual utterer of (8b)).

- (8) a. ?? **Cică** *parcă* Maria nu se simte bine.
 SayC seemingly Maria not refl feel.3sg well
 b. Maria **cică** [*parcă* nu se simte bine.]
 Maria SayC apparently not refl feel.3sg well
 'Maria said/says that apparently she's/was not feeling well.'

This is confirmed by naturally-occurring examples checking for the '*cică* *parcă*' string, which yield the reported speech use, cf. (9). In (9a) the reporting use of SayC is obvious from the ensuing text, where we see a reporting verb, *a comenta* 'comment', the equivalent of 'saying' on the internet (as people speak online via comments), as well as the source of information, i.e., *voi* 'you'. It also displays free indirect speech ingredients: emotive language (interjection, exclamatives) and pronominal shift (from what was assumedly a remark or comment made in the third person ('You're such/like an old lady!') to 1st person. In (9b) *cică* is preceded by a verb of saying in previous discourse (in bold), and in (9c) we see clear direct speech ingredients (the use of quotation marks to introduce the quoted material and the (emotive) pragmatic marker *Auzi* 'Listen to him/her/them! (= Listen to what they are saying)').

- (9) a. **Cică** *parcă* -s o băbuță! Eh, nu mai pot eu
 SayC seemingly am an old lady well not care a fig
 de ce **comentați** voi
 for what comment.2pl you
 '(You say that) I seem like an old lady! I couldn't care less what you write!' (<https://m.facebook.com/aky.gl/photos/cic%C4%83-parc%>)
 b. [Am fost la reprezentanță pt o diagnoză și **mi-au zis că**
 [I went to the dealer's for a check-up and they told me that
 e volanta], că **cică** *parcă* o ia un pic înapoi
 is the flywheel that SayC seemingly it goes in reverse a bit
 (<https://www.clubopel.com/viewtopic.php?p=1176782>)
 'I went to the dealer's for a diagnosis and they told me that the flywheel is to blame, they said it seemingly goes in reverse a bit.'
 c. **Auzi**, **cică** *parcă* a fost offside"
 listen SayC seemingly was offside
 'Just listen to them! They say that it seems to have been an offside'
 (<https://www.gsp.ro/international/liga-campionilor/roma-pentru-italia>)

Fourthly, the two uses of Romanian *cică* can be shown to interact differently with (evidential uses of) the conditional mood. Romanian, like many other languages, may use non-indicative moods like the conditional to convey hearsay or speaker detachment from the truth of the reported proposition⁴. The co-occurrence of such uses with reportative-evidential uses of *cică* are widely documented in the literature and mentioned as a sort of strengthening effect of the epistemic distance of the speaker (see (10a), from Sava 2021: 332). This is less expected with verbal uses of SayC, where speaker distance is weak(er) and present only in as much as we have (first-hand) reporting.

- (10) a. Odată, *cică* ar fi găsit nemții
 once SayC may have found Germans-the
 pe una în durerile facerii. (CoRoLa)
 some woman in pains-the labour-Dat.
 b. Maria *cică* e bolnavă. (intended: *Mary says/said she is sick.*)
 Maria SayC is ill
 (from Direct Speech: 'I am sick.')
- c. % Maria *cică* ar fi bolnavă
 Maria SayC would be ill
 OK if 'Mary says/said that she is sick, but I doubt it.'

Assuming that (10b) is the indirect speech variant of Mary's actual confession that she is sick (i.e., '*I am sick*'), the use of the conditional would be odd – in as much as one would not be using the evidential conditional to talk about one's own physical state. In other words, in the verbal-reporting use, it would be quite odd for a speaker reporting some propositional content about themselves to say something along the lines of 'Allegedly/They say (that) I am sick'. That does not mean to say that (10c) is ungrammatical in the verbal use of SayC/*cică*, but only that the most plausible way to accept the conditional here is by anchoring it not to the actual source of information (i.e., Mary, the agent of saying and utterer of the initial sentence '*I am sick*'), but to the actual speaker of (10b)⁵.

⁴ Such uses are particularly frequent in spoken (TV news) or written media (newspaper) when the source for the reported proposition is not checked/known/confirmed.

(i) Hoțul ar fi intrat prin efracție și ar fi furat ...
 thief-the would have entered through efracation and would have stolen
 'Allegedly, the thief has broken an entry and stolen'

⁵ This dissociation in anchoring (between the speaker/utterer of a complex clause and the main clause subject) is not uncommon and can very well be observed in complex clauses featuring an attitude verb in the matrix (like doxastic *believe*, for example) (i). In simple sentences, the individual anchor is the speaker, but in cases of subordination the matrix subject can take over the role of local anchor. In (i), the fact that Milan is the capital of Italy is objectively false, and is probably not part of the actual speaker's doxastic space, but it is true in Mary's belief worlds, so Mary is the local anchor for the embedded proposition. (see Giannakidou and Mari 2020, 2021, a.o.). Sometimes, dissociation of the Speaker from the truth of an embedded proposition can be signaled by mood selection, i.e., the selection of a non-indicative (= non-veridical) mood in the subordinate – see (iib) – which is exactly what we are arguing is the case here in (10c)

(i) Mary believes that Milan is the capital of Italy.
 (ii) a. Ion crede că Maria e bolnavă / că Maria ar fi bolnavă.
 Ion believes that Mary is-Ind sick-fem / ... that Mary would be sick-fem

Another aspect worth investigating is the interaction of verbal and adverbial *cică* with other *verba dicendi*. What we see is that they take different scope with respect to related verbs of reporting. Reportative-adverbial SayC takes wide scope in (11a), as it does with any other predicate, for that matter, as expected for any mono-clausal structure under the scope of a sentence-adverb. By contrast, in (11b) the *verbum dicendi* takes wide scope and *cică* is thus left to mark a direct quotation, functioning as a pure quotative marker, similar to the English “be like” constructions⁶.

- (11) a. *Cică a zis /menționat /declarat că // a plecat/ a sosit.*
 SayC has said /mentioned / declared that ... // has left / has arrived
 ‘Allegedly he said/mentioned/declared that ... left/arrived....’
- b. *A zis (că) cică nu mai vine* (Indirect Speech)
 has said (that) SayC not anymore come.3sg
 ‘He said that he’s not coming anymore.’
- c. *A zis, cică: „nu mai vin!”* (Direct Speech)
 has said SayC „not anymore come.1sg”
 ‘He said: *I’m not coming anymore!*’

In other words, while reportative-evidential SayC may co-occur with any predicate (in a mono-clausal construction), including *verba dicendi*, over which it takes scope, its verbal counterpart cannot, since it itself fulfils this function⁷. When and if it does (see (11 b, c)), its reporting semantics is bleached or weakened and it left to mark a direct quotation (as a citational marker anticipating direct speech – especially in spoken language where the addressee gets cues as to the nature of the linguistic material they are about to hear).

A sixth test that we propose is the availability of affective discourse markers such as *la naiba!*, *fir-ar să fie!* ‘darn!/damn (it)! I’ll be darned!’. With evidential-reportative uses, these are bound to the actual speaker of the sentence reporting on some third hand evidence. In (12), the annoyance or surprise reading associated with these discursive markers represents the speaker’s stance, not that of the otherwise unknown source.

- (12) *Cică femeia l -a furat, să fiu a(l) naibii!/la naiba!*
 SayC woman-the him has stolen I’ll be damned / damn it
 ‘The woman has allegedly stolen from him, darn it/damn it!’

With verbal uses (reported speech and in particular quotative), the stance can be or is attributed to the original utterer (i.e., the noun to the left of SayC and the expressed source of info). We observe here a gradient between Indirect Speech (13a) and Direct or Free Indirect Speech (13b, c), in the sense that anchoring to the initial speaker (the expressed agent of saying, here, *the woman*) is obvious with the latter two, whereas in (13a) the speaker of the whole complex clause can also be considered as a likely attitude holder.

⁶ For more details on the interpretation and behaviour of ‘be like’ (vs ‘say’ proper), see Haddican, Zweig and Johnson (2011).

⁷ More to the point, it cannot co-occur with another verb in the main clause, where it expresses a reporting/recounting event (and there cannot be more than one predicate per clause). Since we are dealing here with a bi-clausal construction (see the second test above), there are obviously no restrictions whatsoever on the type of embedded predicate.

first dimension, whereas the not-at-issue speech report in B3 has the asserted content at the first dimension and the asserting component at the second.

In (15), speaker A asks B explicitly about his/her evidence, thereby making this the Question Under Discussion (QUD). The first dimension (the at-issue speech report) counts as an “update proposal” that addresses the QUD (along the lines of Farkas and Bruce 2009). In a felicitous discourse, the QUD must be addressed by a subsequent discourse move, but the answer cannot be provided by a proposition that is conventionally marked as not-at-issue. Hence why B3 is odd in the given context.

Applying the test described above for SayC/*cică* in Romanian, cf. (16) – bearing in mind, of course, that the use of *cică* (in either interpretation) is a mark of colloquial/ spoken language – we notice, as expected, that a similar question is felicitously answered when SayC is taken as a reported speech marker, not as a reportative-evidential adverbial meaning ‘allegedly/ supposedly/ apparently’.

- (16) A: Ce te face să crezi că Maria e bolnavă?
What makes you think that Mary is sick?
- B₁: (M-am întâlnit ieri cu fratele ei, Ion, și)
(I met yesterday with her brother, Ion, and)
Ion *cică* Maria vomită și are febră.
Ion SayC Maria vomits and has fever
‘(I met her brother John yesterday), and John said Mary was vomiting and was running a fever.’
- B₂: (M-am întâlnit ieri cu fratele ei, Ion, și)
(I met yesterday with her brother, Ion, and)
Ion *cică*: „Maria e răcită / are febră”.
Ion SayC Maria has the flu/ has a fever.
‘(I met her brother John yesterday), and John said “Mary is vomiting and has a fever.”’
- B₃: ?? *Cică* Maria are febră și vomită.
SayC Mary has a fever and vomits
‘Apparently/Allegedly she’s running a fever and has an upset stomach.’

3.2. Further supporting evidence for the verbal valences of SayC/*cică* in Romanian as an introducer of Indirect, Direct and Free Indirect Speech complements

In this section, we aim to bring further supporting evidence for the verbal status of *cică*. We have argued above that, when used verbally, it behaves as a *defective* verbum dicendi. Why defective? First and foremost, because it lacks the usual verbal markers that regular verbs take, as a consequence of the process of grammaticalization that it has undergone: it lacks overt person and number morphology (the same form can be used for all persons, including self-quotes (17a)), as well as tense or aspect features (the same form can be used for (narrative) present or past reference). Also, it is incompatible with negation. That is, the negative marker *nu* ‘not’ will always take lower scope, regardless of whether we are dealing with verbal or adverbial uses – (17b). This is to be expected, since its

purpose is to report on a statement (with either the reporting event itself or the reported/asserted one at stake). Moreover, in its verbal (especially quotative) interpretation, it occurs mostly in oral narratives, so it behaves like a bound variable whose Reference Time is established by the time set by the current speech situation or the specific narrative context.

- (17) a. Eu/Tu /ea /ele /noi /voi *cică* nu plec /pl –eci/-cacă/-ecăm/-ecați acasă
 I/You/s/he/they/we/you SayC not leave.1sg /2sg /3sg/pl/1pl /2pl home
 ‘I/You/S/He/They/We/You said I/you/he/she/they/we/you
 am/is/are not going home.’
 b. Ea /Ana *cică* nu vine.
 she / Ana SayC not come-3sg
 ‘They **say**/ it is **said** that Ana/she’s **not** coming.’ (reportative/evidential)
 ‘She/Ana **said/says** she is **not** coming.’ (reporting/verbal) (*say* > *not*)

Another strong argument in favour of its verbal valences comes from argument structure. Discussing the lexical verb ‘say’ in English, Grimshaw (2015) claims that it is the overt realization of a light *v say* (on a par with light verbs *be* or *have*), subcategorizing for three arguments: Agent, Linguistic Material and Goal. The Agent is the “sayer”, Linguistic Material refers to what is said and the Goal obviously stands for the addressee. Linguistic Material is (broadly) defined as an embedded speech report which can take the form of direct or indirect quotation (e.g. that-clauses, infinitival clauses, etc.). Importantly, not all that-clauses qualify as Linguistic Material⁸. In order to diagnose the presence of (light verb) *say*, Grimshaw suggests that the most reliable test is replacement of the complement clause with direct quotation.

A closer look at examples where SayC is used with verbal flavour will reveal that, albeit defective, it definitely passes Grimshaw’s test (since, in its quotational use, it introduces direct discourse). Moreover, it can take two or even three arguments, just as its regular (di-)transitive counterpart. To be exact, it always takes an external argument (the agent of saying, i.e., the source of information) and at least one internal argument. The external argument may appear either as a Nominative subject noun to the left of *cică* (as can be seen in many of the above examples, see (4b), (8b), (9a), (17), (18a, b, c)) or post-verbally, as a *la*-phrase (a prepositional phrase coding the Source of Information) in what seem to be highly colloquial reports (see more below, as well as (18a’, b’, c’)). As for internal arguments, verbal *cică* always takes a (reduced⁹) direct object clause functioning as Linguistic Material in the sense of Grimshaw (2015), but it may optionally also take a Goal argument introduced by ‘*la*’. This, however, is only possible when the Agent is realized as a Nominative noun phrase preceding *cică*, not as a(nother) *la*-PP – probably due to staking reasons (i.e., only one *la*-PP allowed at a time).

⁸ See (ia) vs (ib) below:

(i) a. The students said/noted/knew/thought/believed that the exam was easy.
 b. The students said/noted/*knew/*thought/*believed “The exam was easy”.

⁹ By ‘reduced’ or ‘truncated’ we mean a clause which (seems to) lack the complementizer *că*. This, however, is only optional and depends on the (pre- or post-SayC) lexicalization of the subject of saying. We explain this shortly.

In what follows, we will look at these arguments and their behaviour more closely. As already stated and exemplified, the Linguistic Material can appear either as a direct quotation (with all the relevant features, such as an optional colon, inverted commas and indexical pronouns, see (9c), (11c) & (18a, a')) or as indirect (18c, c') or free indirect speech (especially with embedded subjunctive imperatives and emotive language, see (18b, b')).

- (18) a. Ana/ea cică: „Eu nu vin cu voi!”
 Ana/she SayC I not come.1sg with you
 a'. Cică la Ana: „Eu nu vin cu voi!” (DS)
 SayC at Ana I not come.1sg with you
 'Ana/She says/said/was like: *I am not coming with you!*'
 b. Mama cică să plecăm de aici!
 mother SayC sbj leave.1pl from here
 b'. Cică la mama să plecăm de aici! (FIS)
 SayC at mother sbj leave.1pl from here
 Mothers says/is like/goes let's get out of here
 c. Maria cică nu mai vine cu noi.
 Maria SayC not more come.3sg with us
 c'. Cică la Maria *(că) nu mai vine cu noi. (IS)
 SayC at Maria that not more come.3sg with us
 'Mary says/said (that) she's not coming with us anymore.'

In all these instances – with the exception of (18c'), to which we return shortly – the direct object clause lacks an overt complementizer. This is expected with direct quotations, which typically lack overt subordinating elements. Perhaps it should not be surprising with the other instances in (18) either, given that the complementizer *is* actually there, but incorporated in the SayC marker (*cică*). Be that as it may, a second occurrence of *că* is not excluded in Romanian, though deemed quite rare (cf Cruschina and Remberger (2008) and Popescu (2023), who cite only one such example found in the CoRoLa corpus). Our contention instead is that the scarcity of *că* in such contexts (18c) is only apparent and is actually due to a phonological constraint which rules out cacophonies of the type *că-că*, which is exactly what happens in the '*cică că*' 'SayC that' string. Supporting proof for this comes from instances when such adjacency can be avoided, in which case the complementizer is free to appear and its presence is actually preferred, if not obligatory, otherwise ungrammaticality or distorted meaning would ensue¹⁰. These instances are precisely those when the Agent of saying appears expressed

¹⁰ The lexicalization of *că* is not excluded in (ib) below (which corresponds to (4b)), but it is odd on phonetic grounds and it arguably reinforces the verbal status of SayC and the overall bi-clausal structure (see (iib)). Conversely, its lexicalization in (ia) (corresponding to (4a)) is indeed odd, cf. (iia) and – to the extent that such instances are allowed – it actually undermines the reportative-evidential reading and enforces the verbal one.

- (i) a. Cică Ion e bolnav. (✓ **evidential** / */?? verbal)
 SayC Ion be.pres.3sg ill
 'Apparently John is ill.'
 b. Ion cică e bolnav. (✓ verbal / ✓ evidential)
 Ion SayC be.pres.3sg ill

as a *la*-phrase, as shown in (18c'). A missing complementizer would make the structure ungrammatical, cf. (19), due to parsing reasons. The boundary of the complement clause is no longer marked clearly, urging the noun 'Maria' to be more naturally interpreted as the external argument of coming (i.e., [Maria nu mai vine / Maria not comes ...]), and thus leaving the preposition hanging. The presence of the complementizer prompts the parser to analyze Mary as the agent of saying instead, which predicate then takes a full-fledged complement clause as a direct object (with its own referential subject and independent temporal reference).

- (19) ??/*Cică la Maria nu mai vine cu noi.
SayC at Maria not more come.3sg with us

The lexicalization of the Agent of saying as a *la*-PP with (verbal) SayC in Romanian is a fact which has so far gone unnoticed in the relevant literature, to the best of our knowledge. It is not available with lexical verbs of saying (*a zice*, *a spune* 'say, tell'), which only take Nominative subjects, as expected (20), and it seems to have discursive undertones involving speaker stance (disbelief, reluctance, sarcasm, irony)¹¹.

- (20) a. Zice / Zicea / A spus *la Ion / *la ea că vine în excursie.
say.3sg.pres/imperf / has said at Ion / at her that comes-3sg on trip
b. Ziceam *la mine /*la noi că vin /venim la petrecere.
say.imperf.1sg. at me / at us that come.1sg/ 1pl at party.

Thus, once the search is refined to instances featuring SayC/*cică* + *la*-PP + *că*, we notice that naturally-occurring examples with clear verbal uses of SayC and an overt complementizer are far from scarce, see (21), all from Google. The presence of the *la*-PP after SayC (and before the clausal linguistic material) permits or even requires an overt complementizer, since the *că***că* sequence is now avoided. Besides, its absence would affect not just the overall grammaticality (see (19)), but it might also affect meaning. For example, in (21a), the absence of *că* would allow for a reading where the PP no longer signals the source of information (the agent of saying), but an adverbial of place modifying the copula, i.e., 'she says/they say that I'll be fine at her place'

-
- 'John says/said he is sick' OR 'Apparently/They say John is sick.'
(ii) a. ? Cică Ion **că** e bolnav. (?? **evidential** / √% verbal)
SayC Ion that be.pres.3sg sick
(preferred) 'John says that he is sick.'
b. ??Ion ci[că **că**] e bolnav (√ verbal; ?? due to *că-că*)
Ion [SayC that] be.pres.3sg sick
'John says/said that he is sick.'

¹¹ These uses seem confined to oral and colloquial discourse and are similar to markers such as '(ia) *auzi la el/ea/tine*' (lit. hear-imp.2sg at him/her/you, '(Just) [L]isten to him/her/you!'), which we take to involve a covert say predication whose agent is precisely the (pro)nominal introduced via the *la* prepositional phrase (i.e., Listen to what s/he/you are saying...)

- (i) a. Auzi la el, nu vrea să vină. / b. Auzi și la tine, (cică) ești oboist(ă)
Listen to him, he doesn't want to come / Listen to you, (you say) you are tired!

- (21) a. [Sunt pe patul de spital, am piciorul în ghips, am slăbit] [...] și
[I'm on the hospital bed, my leg in a cast and I lost weight] and
cică **la ea că** sunt bine.
SayC LA her that am well
and she says that I am well.'
- b. [Eu nu înțeleg ce dracu' a văzut Victoraș ăsta la ea. [...]]
[I do not understand what the hell this Victoraș fellow s in her ...]
Și cică **la maică-mea că** Bianca e frumoasă.
and SayC at mother-mine that Bianca is beautiful
'And my mother says that Bianca is beautiful.'
- c. cică **la el că** a fugit PL și PSD de responsabilitate
SayC at him that has evaded PL and PSD of responsibility
'...and he says that PL and PSD have evaded any responsibility.'
- d. [așa zice porcul rusesc Lavrov. [...]] Cică **la el**
[so says the Russian pig Lavrov] SayC at him
că Rusia nu a atacat Ucraina.
that Russia not has attached Ukraine
'So says the Russian pig Lavrov. He says that Russia didn't attack the Ukraine.'
- e. Cică **la primărița noastră că** ne bagă apă săptămă-luna viitoare.
SayC at lady mayor ours that fills up.3sg water week-month future
'Our lady-mayor says that she's going to open the water pipes
next wee-onth.'

Besides the Agent and the clausal linguistic material, verbal SayC in Romanian can also take a Goal argument lexicalized as a *la*-PP¹². This, however, happens quite rarely and only as long as the Agent is lexicalized as a pre-verbal Nominative subject, not when it is itself expressed via a similar *la*-PP, which would yield odd structures of the type in (22c)¹³.

¹² *La*, besides functioning typically as a locative preposition, is also commonly used to introduce the Goal indirect object of ditransitives in regional varieties of Romanian (instead of the more formal Dative)

(i) Am dat bomboane **la** copii / copiilor
gave-1sg candies **at** children / children-Dat
'I gave candies to the children.'

¹³ This might also be a syntactic ban on the co-occurrence of Source and Goal arguments as PPs. Following Grimshaw (2015)—and taking into account the argument structure and verbal properties of verbal SayC—we might assume that it resides in a similar structure as its lexical counterpart, with a light *v say* dominating it. A higher TP gives the temporal specification, bound by the narrative reference time in C. When the External Argument is realized as a Nominative agent of saying, it would arguably be legitimated in Spec, vP. Alternately, the structure might allow for an Applicative phrase for cases when a Goal is also present (possible only with Nominative agents, which can only be [+Person], as already explained). For scenarios when the source of information is lexicalized itself as a *la*-PP, this would arguably be hosted in a similar Applicative head, thus precluding the lexicalization of a Goal argument. Supporting evidence for Sources of information being licensed in Applicative heads comes from Djarv (2019, 2023), for cases when belief verbs take an extra nominal post-verbal argument in front of the usual clausal one (cf. *Mary believes John that his father smokes a lot*), where *John* is taken to be the source/utterer of the speech report in the complement proposition. Both the Nominative and the DP within the *la*-PP need to be [+Person], by virtue of their semantics as agents of a reported speech act.

(22d) is a naturally-occurring example featuring a (1st person pronominal) Goal argument in the presence of a pre-verbal Nominative Agent (*el* ‘he’) and a direct quote linguistic material (hence the absence of *că*).

- (22) a. ... și **[mama]**_{Su} *cică* **[la mine]**_{IO} [*că nu mai vine*]_{DO}
 and mother-Nom sayC at/to me that not more come.3sg
 b. ? și *cică* **[mama]**_{Su} **[la mine]**_{IO} [*că nu mai vine*]_{DO}
 and sayC mother-Nom at/to me that not more come.3sg
 c. ... * și *cică* **[la mama]**_{Su} **[la mine]**_{IO} [*că ..*]_{DO}
 and SayC at mother at/to me that
 ‘And mother says to me that she’s not coming anymore.’
 d. *îmi tot verifică mecanicu’ cutia [...]*
 me-Dat keeps verifying mechanic-the gears
și dintr-o dată bagă curent [...] și
 and suddenly pumps up current and
[el]_{Ag} *cică* **[la mine]**_{Goal}: „[BĂ TU NU AI MASĂ!!]”_{LM}
 he-Nom SayC at me Dude you not have mass!
 (<https://motociclism.ro/topic/175263-suzuki-dr-600650-big>)
 ‘The mechanic keeps checking my gears and all of a sudden he pumps up some current and he says to me: *Dude, you have no mass!*’

Besides argument structure, discussed at length above, there is yet further proof for the verbal behaviour of Romanian SayC. This comes from coordination with other predicates (in naturally-occurring examples, see (23)) and adverbial modification (24). In (23a), SayC is coordinated with ‘ask for money’ (by an unspecified subject, marked with *e* in fading font) (i.e., *I asked (him) for money and he said (to me) that I should go to work*); in (23b), it appears with ‘take pictures’ (*He took some pictures (of me) but then said that I should post this one.*). Similarly, in (23c), SayC appears conjoined with an eating event (*My mother ate pizza somewhere down town but she said that it had too much dough..*). Note that in all these examples the evidential reading of SayC/*cică* would be extremely odd. In (23a & b) we have free indirect speech uses, and in (23c) the speaker reports on his/her mother’s actions, stating that she ate pizza and what she had to say about that, not about the alleged state of the dough.

This shows that the type of light *v* in these cases is eventive, or at least what Major (2021) calls ‘dynamic’. Major (2021), building on Grimshaw (2015), suggests that there are two types of (light verb) say (with effects on the argument structure): stative vs dynamic, and that only dynamic ‘say’ is capable of licensing a Goal argument and an Agent, whereas stative ‘say’ introduces only Linguistic Material (what was said) and its ([Person]) source. The availability of applicative heads for sources of information might be viewed as paving the way towards situations when the source need not be a person, but a mere (inanimate) source, as shown in (i). Such type of sources can only feature in PPs (with various other head prepositions), but not as Nominatives

- (i) a. **în anunț** *cică* **că* *nu e voie să înotăm* / **în anunț** *că ..*
 in announcement SayC that not allowed to swim / SayC in announcement that...
 b. *cică* **pe afiș** *că fumatul e interzis* / **pe afiș** *cică* *fumatul e interzis*
 SayC on poster that smoking is forbidden / on poster SayC smoking is forbidden

- (23) a. *am cerut* și eu bani [de la *e_i*] și *e_i* *cică* să muncesc
 I asked for some money (from *x*) and (*x*) SayC I should earn it
 ‘I begged for some money and s/he/they said to me I should go work.’
- b. Mi *a făcut poze*, **dar** *cică* s-o postează pe asta
 He took some pictures of me, but SayC I should post this one
 ‘He took some pictures of me, but said (that) I should post this one.’
- c. Mamei mele îi place pizza cu ton, *a mâncat* undeva în oraș
 my mother likes tuna pizza has eaten somewhere in town
dar *cică* avea mult aluat, așa că ...
 but SayC had much dough, so
 ‘My mother likes tuna pizza, she ate (some) somewhere in town, but she said (that)/*allegedly it had too much dough, so....’
- (24) a. [I-am zis că vine și fostul]
 [I told her her ex was coming]
 și ea *imediat* /*atunci*/ *repede* *cică* nu mai vine
 and she immediately/then /quickly SayC not more come.3sg
 so then she’s quickly like/says she’s not coming anymore.’
- b. El, *după numai câteva minute*, *cică* de ce nu plecăm.
 He, after only a few minutes, SayC why not leave.1pl
 ‘After only a few minutes, he goes/he’s like why don’t we leave.’

Before wrapping up this section, let us address one final question: can the two instances of SayC in Romanian co-occur? If the claims of the present paper are on the right track, the answer should be affirmative, given that the two fulfill different discursive purposes and that in one use *cică* is a parenthetical with a somewhat loose syntax, and in the other a verbal element with strict distribution. However, finding attested examples of such sort is a real challenge, as is building them from scratch (though see (25) below). The difficulty may reside in a clash in source-anchoring, since the evidential adverbial does not have any such anchoring (it represent hearsay or folklore), whereas the (quotative/reported speech) SayC always has an agent of saying representing the source of evidence. However, contexts can arguably be built to accommodate both.

- (20) (*Cică*)_{ev} *atunci* (*cică*)_{ev} *femeia* s-a enervat, s-a ridicat de la masă,
 SayC then SayC woman-the got angry rose from table
a împins paharele și *cică_v* nu mai stă niciun minut//
 pushed glasses-the and SayC not more stay.3sg any minute
 și *cică* să plece toată lumea /”plecați
 and SayC leave.2pl.sbj everyone /Leave.imp 2pl.
 ‘So rumour has it that the woman then gets very angry, rises briskly
 from the table, pushes the glasses away and goes/says that she
 cannot linger another moment / that everyone should leave//
 .. and she’s like/ she goes: *All of you, leave!*’

All of the above clearly show that, in spite of its defective paradigm, the verbal behaviour of SayC in Romanian is undeniable and it should be teased apart from its adverbial uses as an evidential marker encoding hearsay. The next section brings further evidence in support of the double nature of Romanian *cică*, based on a questionnaire testing the intuitions of well over 200 native speakers.

3.3. Speaker-judgement task

In order to check if our intuitions are on the right track, we have devised a small experimental study meant to test speakers' interpretation of sentences featuring SayC in different positions. Our two immediate aims were to a) see whether the different positions of SayC are associated with different interpretations (evidential/adverbial vs verbal), and also b) check whether interaction with the (evidential) conditional is interpreted differently (see again the discussion in 4.1. above and examples under (10)).

We thus had 4 conditions in the test, illustrated below in the four sentences we tested via a Google Form questionnaire. The first features SayC in sentence-initial position, followed by the DP subject (which we take to instantiate evidential/hearsay readings). The second shows *cică* in sentence second position, in between the subject DP and the predicate. This, we argued, is ambiguous between a verbal and an evidential reading of SayC. The third condition tests occurrences where SayC appears again in sentence-initial position – as with condition 1 – but, significantly, is followed by a *la*-PP which forces the verbal reading instead, with the noun inside the PP as the agent of saying. Finally, we replicated condition 2 (DP + SayC+ verb phrase) by adding the conditional into the picture, to see whether the presence of a non-veridical mood (vs the indicative in condition 2) alters speaker interpretation and tips the ballance towards evidentiality rather than speech act reading.

(26)

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1) SayC DP VP ... | Cică Ion e bolnav și nu poate veni la...
SayC Ion is sick and cannot come... |
| 2) DP SayC VP.. | Ion cică e bolnav și nu poate veni...
Ion SayC is sick and cannot come... |
| 3) SayC <i>la</i> -DP CP ... | Cică la Ion [că e bolnav] și nu poate...
SayC at Ion that is sick and cannot come... |
| 4) DP SayC VP[+cond] | Ion cică ar fi bolnav și nu poate veni
Ion SayC would be ill and cannot come... |

For each sentence, the respondents (235 people aged 20–65, with high-school and university level education) were provided with two interpretations (that is,

paraphrases) A and B that they had to choose from, the first displaying the adverbial-evidential use (*They/people say that/Allegedly, ...*), the other the verbal use (*Noun Subject said that...*). They were also provided with a ‘Comments’ section, while being nevertheless required to opt for either of the two options for each sentence in part. In the pie charts below, quoted for each condition, the A option (evidential interpretation) is given in blue, whereas the B option (verbal valence) appears in red. Let us have a look at the results.

For condition 1 (SayC DP VP), the chart shows that almost 85% of the respondents were on target, choosing the reportative/evidential reading. A few did comment that both readings are acceptable, with evidential preferred. This confirms our expectation that this distribution triggers evidential readings for SayC.

1. Cică Ion e bolnav și nu poate veni la petrecere.

235 de răspunsuri

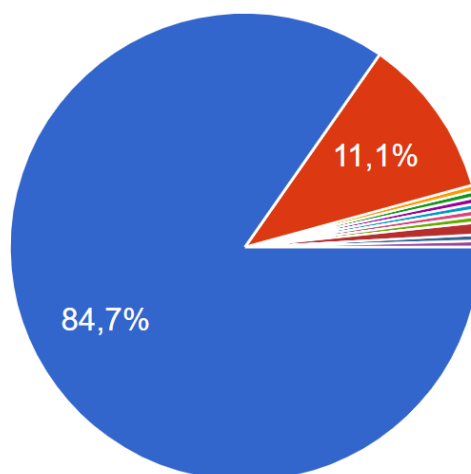


Fig. 1. Results for Condition 1

Very interestingly, the results for condition 2, with the DP-SayC-VP word order, neatly confirm the ambiguity we have argued for, and hence the allowance for verbal interpretations. Thus, while 44% of respondents chose to associate this example with a reported speech act reading, 51% opted for the evidential interpretation. The percentages are quite well balanced and there were many remarks here commenting on the ambiguity of the example. Comparing the chart in Fig 1 to that in Fig 2 one can easily see a preference for evidential readings vs ambiguity.

2. Ion cică e bolnav și nu poate veni la petrecere.

234 de răspunsuri

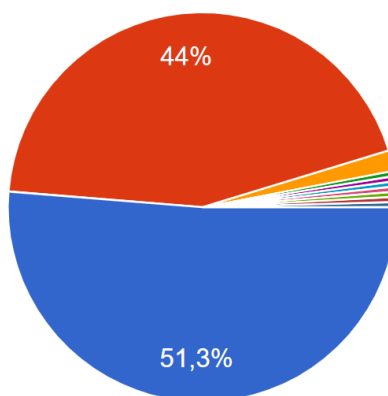


Fig. 2. Results for Condition 2

For condition 3, which tested the word order SayC *la-DP* that p, the results show that the *verbum dicendi* use prevails: 78% of informants chose this over evidential readings, which was preferred only in 14% of cases. Also, there were some comments about the ‘oddity’ or even ungrammaticality of the structure. As already noted, it belongs to the colloquial register and is seldom used in formal speech.

4. Cică la Ion că e bolnav, și nu poate veni la petrecere

235 de răspunsuri

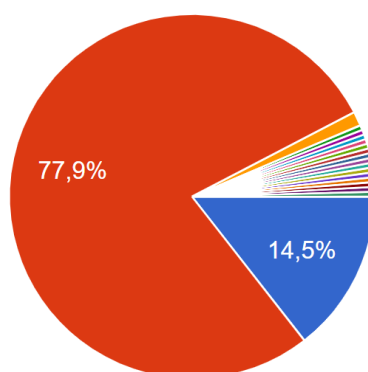


Fig. 3. Results for Condition 3

Finally, as far as condition 4 is concerned, which replicates condition 2 but adds the conditional, the results show that evidential interpretations clearly prevail (over 80% vs 14% for verbal uses), cf Fig. 4.

5. Ion cică ar fi bolnav și nu poate veni la petrecere.

235 de răspunsuri

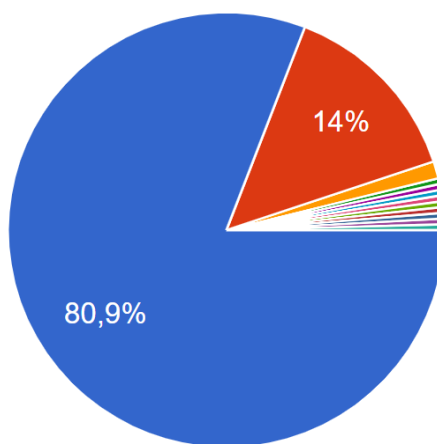


Fig. 4. Results For Condition 4

Put together, the above results allow us to draw two important conclusions, which confirm our claims. First, word order does matter for interpretation: when SayC scopes over the DP (and the entire proposition) (as we see for Condition 1), it is unproblematically interpreted as an evidential adverbial, but when it scopes under, cf. Condition 2, the sentence is truly ambiguous and readily allows verbal uses. Moreover, the two valences of SayC/cică can be teased apart via a series of tests, as discussed at length in Section 4.1. Secondly, mood does seem to play a part, too. This becomes clear when we compare the results for Conditions 2 and 4, which are identical except for mood: in the former, SayC follows the DP subject and the mood of the ensuing predicate is the indicative, whereas in the latter, with the same word order, we have the conditional. The results for condition 2 show ambiguity between adverbial and verbal uses, while those for condition 4 show an overwhelming preference for the adverbial-evidential interpretation – under identical word order. This difference can only be accounted for via mood shift: the conditional takes on evidential readings, as expected, swerving the interpretation of the proposition towards similar interpretations. This is also backed by some of the comments respondents made to condition 4, noting that the sentence implies a claim made by John which the speaker dissociates from or believes to be false or unsubstantiated.

4. CONCLUSIONS

As we hope to have been able to show, SayC/*cică* in Romanian has a variety of valences, not just purely evidential (adverbial), but also verbal, as a defective verb of saying introducing direct speech (quotative uses), indirect speech, as well as free indirect speech. As a reported speech marker, it shares many syntactic traits with its fully verbal counterpart (argumenthood, adverbial modification, coordination with other predicates, etc.). As an introducer or direct quotes, it resembles English ‘be like’ constructions, as well as their Romanian counterparts.

Overall, our paper contributes towards a more comprehensive understanding of SayC instances in Romanian and adheres to the view that reported speech and reportative evidentiality should not be regarded as a bipolar division, but as a ‘cline’ of functions, with distinctly reported-speech uses on one end, distinctly evidential uses on the other, and ambiguous or ‘merging’ uses in-between. This goes hand in hand with the question regarding the extent to which the original speaker’s perspective is present: fully present and acknowledged with quotational SayC, merely recounted (but attributed to a specific source) in reported speech uses, disregarded and lost in purely evidential uses.

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