

**(Dis-)
Embodiment,
Palpability, and
Cognitive State**

Marking Sensory
Evidence in English

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My case study: a peripheral set

sense-related adverbs

• visibly	see
• olfactorily	smell
• gustatorily	taste
• audibly	hear
• tangibly	touch
• palpably	touch

Illustrations

gustatorily and olfactorily

- We sat over an array of Indian food - unnamable sauces and unidentifiable solid pieces, sixty-four combinations of sauce and solid, all subtle and strong, alternately **gustatorily** delicate and fire-up-the-nose overwhelming.
- ... whatever was for breakfast, lunch or dinner was **olfactorily** announced as soon as you stepped into the bedroom.

...visibly and audibly

- They are visibly black because of their darkened shading, audibly black because of their voice coding ...
- Then came a long and awkward pause. Canoe sighed, audibly. “Come on, ladies,” she said. “We've gotten off on the wrong foot.”
- His fingers were also scarred and misshapen. The contrast between his face and his body was so great it was shocking. That angel's face and the twisted, ridged arms and hands. Tara shuddered visibly and flung herself into Jessica's arms.

tangibly

- He frantically shuffled through papers on his desk until he found the memo -- the memo he had never seen, that could not possibly have been there the day before, but was, none the less, dated the day before. It was in his hands now, **tangibly real**, announcing to all members of the company that today would be Cause Day.

palpably

- If there is any single moment in the history of warfare at which an authentic sense of awe at the exponential power of gunpowder could be **palpably felt**, it is here in the accounts of those firing these great guns in 1453.

**All relate to concrete sensory
on-line
evidence**

Their site in Talmy's framework:

Cognitive State

Architectonic Systems:

- Configurational Structure
- Perspective
- Attention

Force Dynamics:

the forces exerted by and the causal interactions among entities marked out by the first three systems

Cognitive State

Cognitive State

Talmy (2006)

subsystems:
volition, intention,
expectation, affect
... and ...

epistemics: a
sentient entity's
state of knowledge

divided into
factivity and
evidentiality

correlated with
knowing and
inferring

with factuality and
likelihood

Epistemics and Evidentiality

evidentiality: asserts and/or names evidence

specifying the **mode** (direct, inferred, mediated) or the **source** (external or internal to the speaker)

epistemics: evaluates the evidence (in terms of degrees of certainty of an event's occurrence or non-occurrence or a proposition's being the case or not)

syncretism in markers:
epistentials (Faller 2002)

Evidential markers in English

prototypical
adverbial
markers in
English:
*obviously,
evidently,
apparently*

specify
only the
fact **that**
there is
some
evidence,
not **which**
evidence

the
evidence
itself is
found in
the
context

markers used as
triggers
directing
hearers'
attention
outside
themselves
(treated in the
C-Factors of
Attention
System)

**not so in
mediated
evidentials:**
*according to, it
is said, is said to*
... specify the
mode and
source of
evidence

Specifying the mode of evidence

sense- related adverbs

- | | |
|---------------|-------|
| • visibly | see |
| • olfactorily | smell |
| • gustatorily | taste |
| • audibly | hear |
| <hr/> | |
| • tangibly | touch |
| • palpably | touch |

**Two groups may be distinguished by
recruiting the notion of
palpability**

Introducing palpability

from “Fictive Motion” (1996):
a gradient **parameter**
pertaining to degrees “with
which some entity is
experienced in consciousness,
from the fully concrete to the
fully abstract” (Talmy 2000, 1:
141).

To serve as reference points,
four levels of palpability are
designated along the gradient:

- the fully concrete
- the semi-concrete
- the semi-abstract
- the fully abstract

The concrete level of palpability

entities experienced
as fully manifest and
palpable

as clear and vivid

ostensive characteristics
of precise form, texture,
coloration, and
movement

entity is experienced as
having real, physical,
autonomous existence

not as dependent on
one's own cognizing
of it

experienced as being
"out there"

not as a construct in
one's mind

entity can be
experienced with full
consciousness

a sense of certainty
about the existence and
the attributes of the
entity

(Talmy 1996/2000)

The semi-abstract level of palpability

entity has little or
no ostension

with no reality of
visibility

one's experience is
that one does not
“see” such an
entity explicitly

but rather
“senses” its
implicit presence

The abstract level of palpability

evocation of an object
does no longer require
“on-line” sensory
stimulation

is the criterial feature of
cognitive
representations
instantiated in linguistic
schematizations

impalpable, abstract,
vague, and perhaps
faint

lacking in ostensive
characteristics

experienced as
subjective

“in oneself rather than
‘out there’”

invoked in the
formation of inferences

in the assessment of
veridicality

and in propositional
attitudes such as wish
and intention

Associating the **abstract** level of palpability implies **disembodiment**

in English
**epistemic
modals**

there is **no**
palpable sensing
of force

I suggest:
core evidentials:
*obviously,
apparently,
evidently*

The sense-related adverbs and palpability

very infrequent
apart from *visibly*
in comparison to
the core
evidentials

gustatorily,
olfactorily,
audibly, visibly:
the ceived entities
are clearly sensed
at the **fully**
concrete level of
palpability

objects can
literally be tasted,
smelled, heard,
and seen

... less concrete levels of palpability ...

- ... painful memories of the five-day search and rescue hang over the crew **tangibly**, like the feeling one has upon waking up disoriented from a nightmare ...
- I must confess that I found the unnatural quiet and apparent motionlessness **palpably** **disturbing**, almost to the point of vertigo; it was as though the whole planet had stopped moving, and now waited in hushed anticipation for some great and climactic event.

What about ‘touch’ in *tangibly* and *palpably*?

- clearly touchable objects are associated, but also objects that have no ostension, are not tied to the here-and-now: oscillating between the **concrete and the abstract level of palpability**
- cannot be used as framing adverbs (**tangibly/ *palpably speaking*), but *visibly/audibly/ gustatorily/olfactorily speaking* is possible

tangibly as evidential or epistemic marker

- The second determining characteristic of postnational novels that they have often been translated into a whole array of languages and published elsewhere than the nation-state in which they were set, sometimes even before they appear in the original language, is also **tangibly evident** in this case.

palpably

- When he sent the troops into Basra, you know what many of them were? They weren't Shiite as he is -- tens of thousands of them were Sunni troops. And the reconciliation has been incredible. At some point Democrats are going to have to be seen as people who are totally out of ***touch*** with reality on Iraq, because what they're saying is the case there // is **palpably not the case.**
- All through the Hebrew Bible, the prophets perpetually proclaim that the Jewish people, that Israel, has failed to keep the covenant with Yahweh. Nowhere do they say what is **palpably true** on the basis of Jewish history and of human history in general, which is that Yahweh has failed to keep his covenant with the people.

palpably as evidential (or epistemic?) marker

- When T.S. Eliot writes near the end of “Tradition and the Individual Talent” that he “proposes to halt at the frontiers of metaphysics or mysticism and confine himself to such practical conclusions as can be applied by the responsible person interested in poetry” it is too late: **palpably** [= ‘obviously/clearly’], he has been drawing on metaphysics all through the essay.

Can these observations be cognitively motivated?

Maybe by the fact that the impression of touch, unlike that of the other senses, is very difficult to isolate, since tactile sensory information enters the nervous systems from every single part of the body.

As a consequence, evoking such kind of perception as evidence may easily lend itself to being reanalyzed in terms of a more general or abstract kind of evidence.

The adverbs are not alone, though ...

- It may be pointed out that the concrete level of palpability is likewise salient for constructions containing the perception verbs *smell*, *taste*, *feel*, *sound*, *look* plus the comparative particle *like*.
- These verbal constructions are indeed far more frequent than the corresponding adverbs discussed above.
- Following from what has been said before, it is now perhaps less amazing that the verb *touch* does not occur in this construction type, but instead the general verb *feel* is used.
- It has the same bifurcation of meaning as *palpable* and *tangible*, rendered by the *OED Online* as ‘to examine or explore by touch’ and ‘to perceive, or be affected with sensation by (an object) through those senses which (like that of touch) are not referred to any special ‘organ’.

Some conclusions

Criteria of use for *tangibly* and *palpably*

Conceptual Meaning

- relates to any sensory evidence, but also used as general inferential

'Lexicalization'

- from touch to any sense, 'easily perceivable'

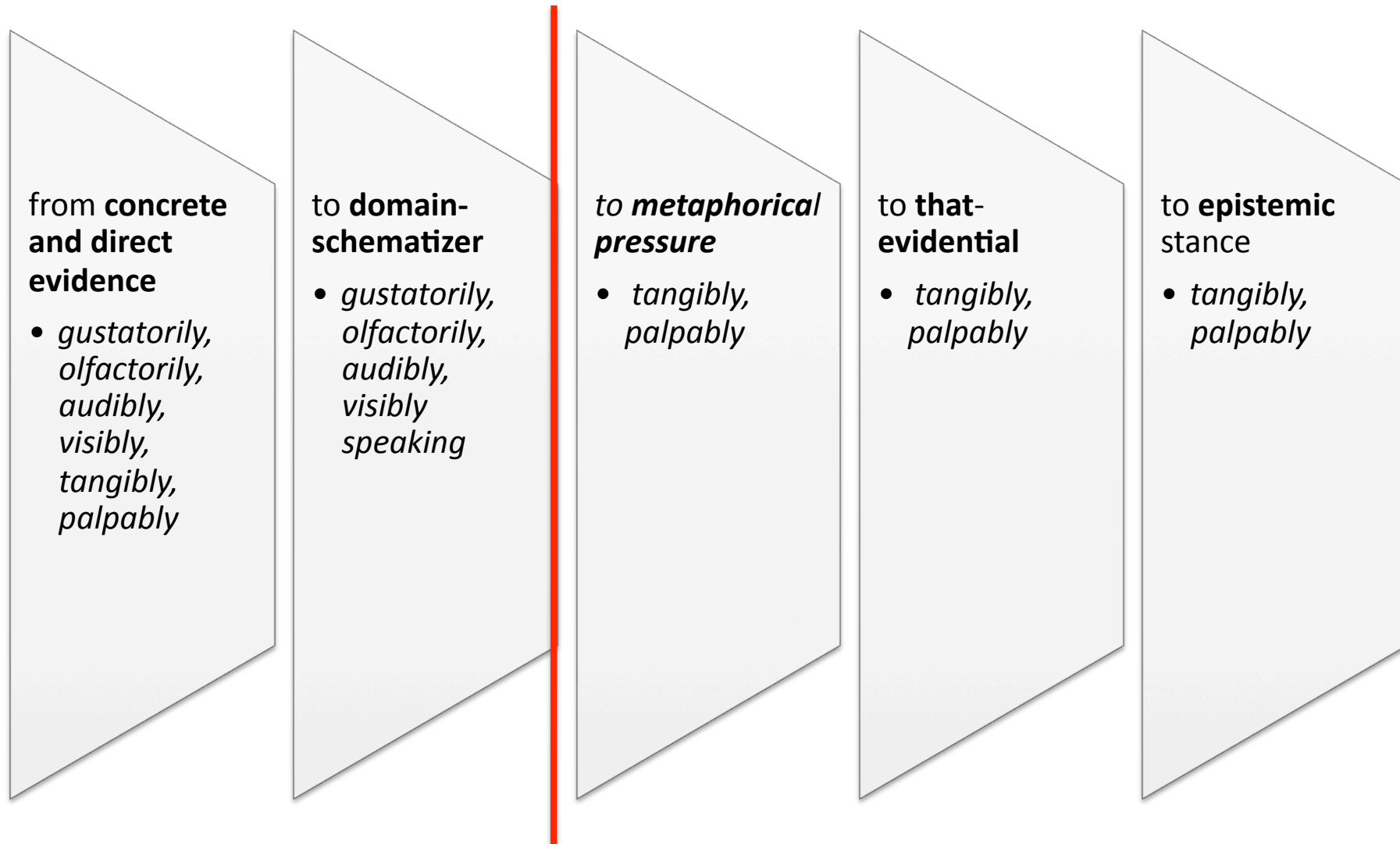
Domain of Application

- variable, but often propositional

Stance

- used as positive support in an argument
- **epistemic stance** = 'clearly'

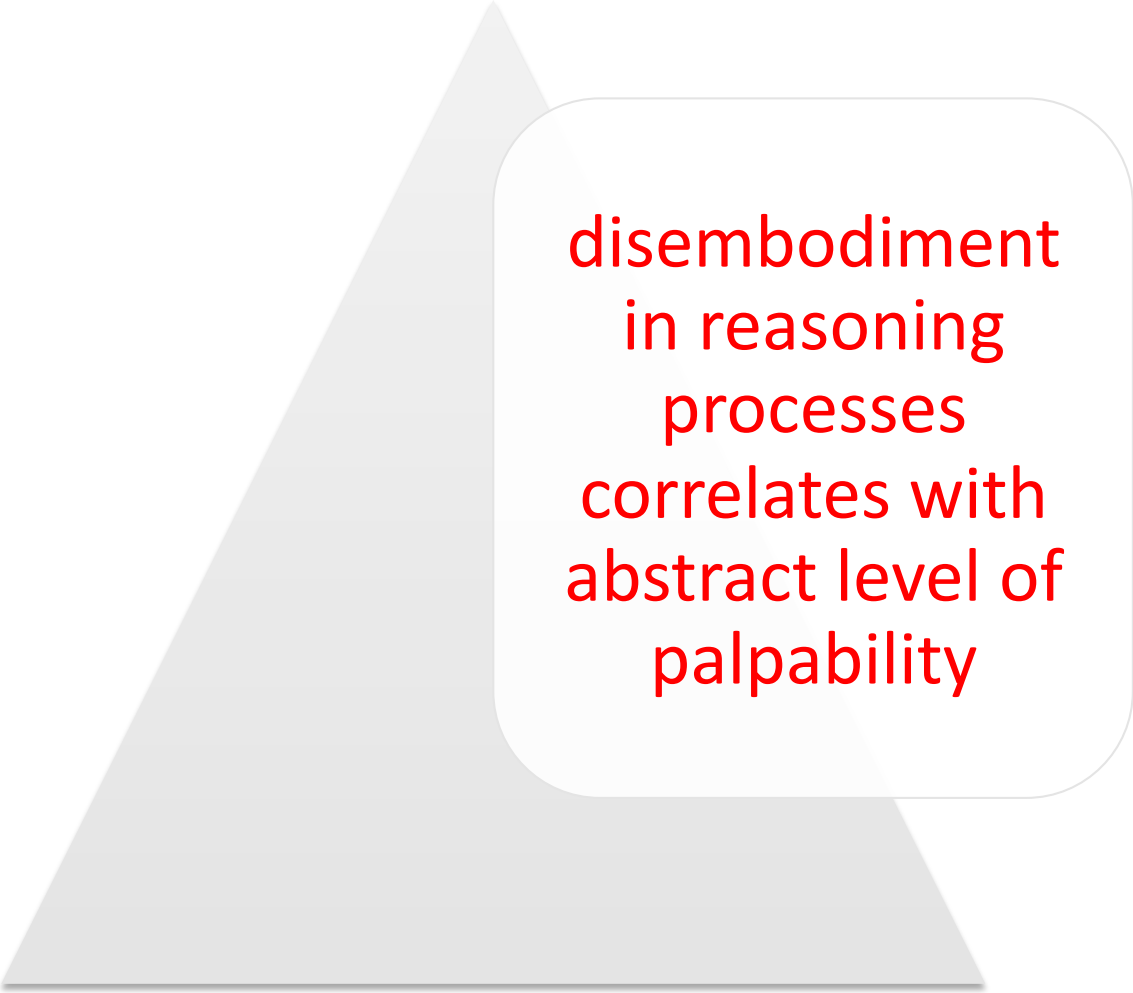
A functional cline



Examples

- It is **palpably false** in depicting what death is and in depicting how normal people behave and feel.
- What Geraldine Ferraro said is **palpably true**, and everyone knows it.
- And yet the story is too unbelievable for the realism to work, and something in it seems **tangibly false**.
- the idea that holiness is the fulness of humanity appears, in this case, quite **tangibly true**.

From embodiment of all senses to verbal disembodiment



disembodiment
in reasoning
processes
correlates with
abstract level of
palpability

Some remarks about (dis-) embodiment

(Dis-)Embodiment

- Talmy (2011: 636) explicitly warns cognitive linguistics not to indulge too much in a kind of pretheoretically conceived and insufficiently defined notion of embodiment
- conceptualized as “concreteness as basic idea”
- should not submit to the unqualified presumption “that experience with the tangible world is developmentally earlier and provides the basis for later conceptions of intangible phenomena”

A cognitive system for objectivity and reason

- Alternatively, it may rather be legitimate to assume the existence of an “**actual cognitive system for objectivity and reason**” (which, in turn can be seen as housing the categories of **epistemics** and **evidentiality**)
- whether or not the assessed components themselves arose through otherwise embodied processes
- that might be the source of the very conception of an **objective domain** (Talmy 2011: 637)

A preliminary and subjective general assessment: Talmy's differentiated stances

**domain-general
vs. domain-
specific**
cognitive
conceptions of
language

the **system** vs.
use issue

a **modular** vs.
non-modular
architecture of
cognition

morpheme- vs.
construction-
based
conceptions
and
explanations of
grammar

the potential
relation
between
cognition and
neural
structuring

consciousness,
introspection
and **analytical**
thought as
empirical
methods

**All this, and much more, I think, has
contributed to Talmy's 'palpably'
unique status in cognitive linguistics**

Thank you for attending!

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