

Evidentiality in spoken Kazakh: gender distribution

Dilnaz Alzhanova

Nazarbayev University, School of Sciences and Humanities WLL 499: Capstone II

Instructor: Amanda Murphy

Academic Advisor: Wulidanayi Jumabay

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Abstract

The capstone analyzes the relationship between gender and evidentiality usage in spoken Kazakh. Evidentiality is a grammatical category that shows the source of information. In Kazakh, evidential meaning is commonly expressed through the inflectional suffix *-(I)p* and the evidential copula *eken*. My main research question is whether male and female speakers differ in their use of these evidential markers and whether gender influences the functions of evidentiality in spoken Kazakh. Previous studies on languages such as Salar and British English suggest that women tend to use evidential markers more frequently than men. However, little research has explored this relationship in Kazakh as spoken in Kazakhstan. The primary data is from the *Multimedia Corpus of Modern Spoken Kazakh Language* (MCSKL), a multimodal corpus of naturally occurring Kazakh conversations. My dataset consists of 300 minutes of recordings (150 minutes of female speakers' conversations and 150 minutes of male speakers'), involving a total of 60 speakers. The results show that evidential markers were used equally in terms of frequency by male and female speakers (70 instances produced by women and 69 by men). However, some differences appear in marker preference: male speakers use *eken* more frequently, while female speakers use *-(I)p* more often. Overall, this study contributes to research on evidentiality in Turkic languages and gender studies by providing corpus-based evidence from spoken Kazakh.

1. Introduction

1.1. Linguistic phenomena

In everyday Kazakh speech, a single sentence can reveal not only what happened, but how the speaker knows it. This function fulfills evidentiality, which is a grammatical category that expresses how a speaker expresses the source of information (Aikhenvald 2004: 3). This paper studies whether there is any difference between women and men using evidentiality or not. The observed language is Kazakh (spoken in Kazakhstan), one of the Turkic languages, which have grammaticalized evidential markers. Hence, this research analyzes the usage of Kazakh verbal inflectional suffix *-(I)p* and evidential copula *eken*, which goes back to the Old Turkic copula verb *är-* ‘to be’ plus participle suffix *-GAn*. The study examines their gender distribution, functions, and contextual usage through a corpus-based approach. I discussed which gender uses evidential markers more frequently in spoken Kazakh language. According to Pan (2023: 103), the Salar female speakers use evidentiality more than men do, as their speech is more narrative and emotional, while men use more assertive and direct forms in their language. I decided to do this research to understand which gender uses evidentiality markers more and whether the context and function affect that or not. This is why gender and function correlation were studied.

The functions of Kazakh evidential markers *-(I)p* and *eken* can be divided into three central meanings and one semantic extension: mirativity (the semantic category referring to new, unexpected information (Delancey 2012)), direct perception (when information directly perceived by a speaker), hearsay (reported information), and inference (a speaker concludes information based on indirect evidence). In my research, I analyzed mirativity as a semantic extension of evidentiality, since evidential markers cannot express mirativity meaning on their own and require the modal particle *goy* for reinforcement. For instance, in English, such sentences as “Oh, you came!” and “Apparently, you actually were right!” express mirativity, while “As I taste it, the food is delicious” and “From what I hear, the music sounds amazing” shows a direct perception function of evidentiality. Next, hearsay

function examples would be “They say he moved” and “Reportedly, the museum is closed today”, since a speaker received the information from someone else. The sentence “It looks like it rained all night” presents an inference as a speaker realized it through wet land or sound of rain. Unlike English, where evidential meanings convey lexical items, Kazakh language expresses evidentiality grammatically through markers like the inflectional suffix *-(l)p* and the copula *eken*. For example, the (1) sentence shows mirativity (surprise) through the copula *eken*:

- (1) *Vrač okazivaetsya qazir minīstr bol-īp otir eken*
 Doctor turns.out now minister COP-CONV AUX EVID.COP

‘Turns out, the doctor is now serving as a minister’

(Source: MCSKL)

The real mirative meaning comes from this Russian word *okazivaetsya* (turns out). So, mirativity function here can be seen by lexical item *okazivaetsya* (turns out), evidential copula *eken* and the speaker’s intonation, which clearly delivers a surprise and new discovery. If the Russian word *okazyvaetsya* were not in the sentence, this context would not express mirativity on its own. Next, the (2) statement presents hearsay, the information shared between two or more speakers about other people or events:

- (2) *Taraz-ya bar-īp kel-īp-ti*
 Taraz-DAT go-CONV come-EVID-3

‘Apparently [they] went to Taraz’

The (3) example represents inference:

- (3) *Keše dala-da swīq bol-dī eken*
 Yesterday outside-LOC cold COP-PST3 EVID.COP

‘It was cold outside yesterday’

The speaker probably did not feel the cold directly, but concluded it was cold outside because of some indirect evidence like seeing snow, ice or wind. The next (4) sentence expresses direct perception.

(4) <i>Potom bïtip</i>	<i>qara-sa-m</i>	<i>Kamilya-m</i>	<i>eken</i>
Later like.that	look-COND-1SG	Kamila-POSS.1SG	EVID.COP

‘Then I looked and it turned out to be my Kamila’

(Source: MCSKL)

Here the speaker talked about herself at the moment when she saw her friend Kamila, so it means that she directly perceived the information. Overall, these four categories represent evidential markers’ functions in Kazakh.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 1 discusses the background and research focus of this study. After that, Section 2 presents the literature review, next Section 3 elaborates on the methodology and data collection, followed by Section 4, which summarizes the results, and last Section 5 provides a discussion.

1.2. Gender and evidentiality

There are many studies on how gender of speakers affects language use. According to Pan (2023: 93), “the current review of existing research on gender and language suggests that men and women differ in certain aspects of language expression, with the research to date mainly having been concerned with women’s speech patterns”. Nevertheless, the correlation between evidentiality and gender is not well investigated in current studies.

Abish (2024) conducted a corpus-based study of the use of evidentials in women’s and men’s spoken Kazakh in China. According to her results, male speakers use evidential markers more often than female speakers in Kazakh as spoken in China. Nevertheless, no study has examined the evidentiality usage across genders in Kazakh as spoken in Kazakhstan. Thus, this paper contributes to both sociolinguistics by analyzing gender distribution and pragmatics by exploring the contexts in which evidential markers are used.

The main focus is analyzing which gender uses evidentiality more frequently in the speech and comprehending its core function. All examples used in this paper are recordings between two and more

speakers, which are classified as conversations. The context analysis was made for comparison of female and male speakers' evidential markers' usage. This creates an opportunity to identify key social factors in which people use evidentiality. Thus, it could answer the question of whether women use evidential markers more than men do and, if so, what social aspects impact on that. For example, the stigma that men should appear confident leads them to use evidential markers less frequently. Women, on the other hand, tend to express emotions more openly, which may cause them to use evidentiality more often, for instance the copula *eken* or inflectional suffix *-(I)p* to convey surprise.

This is the reason why my research connected such fields of linguistics as: sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, and discourse analysis. This paper had two primary research questions:

- 1) Which gender uses evidential markers *-(I)p* and *eken* more frequently in spoken Kazakh, and why?
- 2) How does gender affect the choice of evidential function (mirativity, direct perception, hearsay, inference) in spoken Kazakh?

This study primarily focused on how gender influences the use of evidentiality in Kazakh. So, it explores which gender employs evidential markers more, how their usage differs, and why.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Evidentiality

Evidentiality is a grammatical category that expresses the source of information. "In about one quarter of the world's languages, marking information sources is obligatory; these languages have a grammatical category of evidentiality" (Aikhenvald 2007: 207). This is an independent grammatical category that was established by the mid-1960s. However, for some languages, marking the source of information is not mandatory. For this reason, evidentiality as a category was ignored for centuries since Indo-European languages lack it. Recently, the interest for evidentiality has arisen, but it still is one of the most unknown grammatical categories (Aikhenvald 2004: 3).

There are different factors that affect evidentiality use: culture, lexis, and genre. In addition, pragmatic and discourse-related factors play a crucial role in determining how evidential markers are used in communication. Sometimes entire genres are connected to fixed evidential markers. In Kham language, spoken mostly in west and central Nepal, a reported particle *di* should appear every time at the end of a sentence in traditional stories (Aikhenvald 2004: 310). Thus, evidentiality influences how speakers perceive the world, process knowledge, and define the truth and credibility in discourse.

Overall, evidentiality is a widely attested linguistic category with shared patterns among languages, but evidential markers' use directly depends on the cultural and grammatical context of each language. Rather than being strictly universal, evidentiality demonstrates cross-linguistic similarities alongside significant language-specific variation. For example, according to Aikhenvald (2004: 372) in some languages, evidentiality use implies unawareness (e.g., Jarawara, Tariana), while in others it shows unexpectedness (e.g., Lithuanian, Nganasan). This variation highlights the semantic flexibility of evidential systems across languages.

2.2 Evidentiality in Kazakh

Many Turkic languages, such as Kazakh, Uzbek, and Turkish, use specific verbal suffixes and evidential copulas to express the source of information. Therefore, evidentiality in Turkic languages can be considered grammaticalized. In the Kazakh language, the inflectional suffix *-(I)p* and evidential copula *eken* are used to express evidentiality. More specifically, the form *-(I)p(ti)* and the copula *eken* typically encode *indirectivity* (Johanson prefers this term to evidentiality), indicating that the information is not directly witnessed by the speaker (Johanson 2003: 280). This indirectness may include reported speech, inference or non-direct perception of events.

Another function of *eken* is non-confirmativity (Straughn 2011: 173), which means that the speaker does not fully commit to the truth of the statement they report. In other words, the speaker conveys the information without fully committing to its truthfulness. It means that a speaker does not completely confirm that a statement that they told is fully true. Also, indirectivity indicates the

speaker's source of information and their degree of certainty about the statement (Csató 2000: 34).

Thus, evidentiality in Kazakh is closely related to epistemic modality, although the two categories are not identical.

Kazakh evidential markers express different meanings depending on the context: indirectness (when the source of information perceived from another person's report or was inferred), surprise, or rhetorical emphasis (turning interrogative question into rhetorical one). Straughn (2011: 93) gives an example: *Awganıstan boyınša beysenbide 26 adam qaza bolıan **eken*** (According to Afghanistan, 26 men died on Thursday). From this sentence, it is clearly seen that the information was obtained from a reported source. In addition, the speaker does not fully confirm the truth of the statement. Thus, this sentence expresses both the inference and non-confirmativity function of the marker 'eken'.

Straughn's (2011: 153) main claim is that the *eken* marker expresses emotivity (surprise/discovery). For instance, according to the author, in declarative statements, the 'eken' marker usually highlights surprise or discovery: *Durıs **eken** ıoy!* (Why, that's right!) (Straughn 2011: 135). This evidence shows that the 'eken' marker often appears in statements that express emotions, not only information.

Therefore, *eken* should be analyzed as a multifunctional marker that encodes both evidential and expressive (emotional) meanings. In other words, 'eken' is not only an indirect marker, but also expresses a speaker's attitude and reaction. The emotional (mirative) function of *eken* interacts closely with its evidential meaning, making its pragmatic interpretation highly context-dependent in Kazakh discourse.

2.3 Evidentiality and gender

"The frequency of an evidential may simultaneously correlate with genre and with the sex of a speaker" (Aikhenvald 2004: 315). Building on this observation, this study focuses on gender differences in evidentiality use: how women and men express evidentiality in their speech.

In Salar language, women tend to use evidential markers more than male (Pan 2023: 104).

According to Pan (2023: 95) the participants were asked to talk about their future vacation: while men used non-evidential marker *-yur*, women used evidential suffix *-Ga*. From this example, it can be observed that women prefer to use evidential markers, while men use non-evidential ones. However, these findings are based on a specific linguistic and cultural context and may not be universally applicable.

Another similar research was made by Söderqvist, using British English spoken language data from corpora. There are 3 categories of evidentiality: (1) evidence from first-hand physical senses (I have seen), (2) information from someone else's report (She said), and (3) information based on a cognitive process (I imagine) (Söderqvist 2017: 17). According to the author, female speakers mostly use hearsay (2) and sensory (1) evidentiality, while male speakers use inferential (3) evidentiality. Similarly to Pan (2023), these results point to a higher frequency or preference for certain types of evidential strategies among female speakers. These results suggest possible gender-based preferences. However, they should be interpreted cautiously due to differences in linguistic structure between English and languages with grammatical evidentiality. In particular, Söderqvist analyzes lexical expressions of evidentiality, whereas Pan examines grammatical markers, which makes direct comparison between the studies less straightforward.

The result of Söderqvist is the same as in the previous paper by Pan: women use evidentiality more than men. Since usage of evidentiality means uncertainty, some people believe that women use more tentative language than men. Leaper and Robnett (2011) explored this question. It focuses on how men and women use tentative language (hedges ('probably', 'seems'), disclaimers, tag questions, and rising intonation that signal uncertainty or deference) differently. The authors' main claim is that women use more tentative language than men, but the difference is very small and depends on the context. They believe that it is not the gender trait, but rather a contextual pattern. Moreover, they argue that these differences are shaped by situational factors rather than inherent gender traits.

So, the tentative language is used more in politeness, cooperation, and power differences situations, which means that women's tentativeness depends on the context. As an example, the evidence showed that women use more tentative language in formal and evaluative settings, where the situation encourages the use of tentative language. While in informal settings, women do not use tentative language more than men, which means that women have an ability to read situations and choose the language style. This suggests that speakers strategically adapt their linguistic behavior rather than simply reflecting gender norms.

Leaper and Robnett (2011: 139) stated that “perceptions of tentative speech as reflecting either interpersonal sensitivity or powerlessness may vary according to the listener’s gender - with women more likely to interpret tentative speech as a sign of interpersonal sensitivity and men more likely to view it as a lack of assertiveness”. This highlights the role of perception in evaluating linguistic behavior. In general, most male speakers use tentative language at the same amount or even more than an average female speaker” (Leaper and Robnett 2011: 139). Another interesting research was conducted by Park et al. (2016: 19): male speakers prefer more highly assertive and cold language (swearing, object-oriented words, controversial topics), while female speakers use language that was highly assertive and at the same time warm (positive emotion, support, personal reaction). These finding challenges common stereotypes about gender and communication. So, it means that despite all gender stereotypes, women are as assertive as men and their tentative language use means great understanding of situations.

There are a lot of factors that can influence language use across genders. Overall, these studies show that while some research reports gender-based differences in evidential language use, these patterns are not consistent across languages, linguistic systems, or communicative contexts. Therefore, further research in evidentiality and gender correlation, especially in understudied languages such as Kazakh, is necessary to better understand these patterns, which is the focus of the present study.

3. Data and Methods

3.1. Multimedia Corpus of Modern Spoken Kazakh Language data

The main data set that was used for this research was extracted from Multimedia Corpus of Modern Spoken Kazakh Language (MCSKL), where I am a research assistant. As Troiani et al. (2022: 11) stated, “the MCSKL is a free-access multimodal corpus of naturally occurring speech consisting of a set of digital audio and video recordings accompanied by a corresponding set of transcriptions, annotations, and metadata”. The MCSKL corpus, which consists of at least 10,000,000 words (around 243 hours) of gathered data (recordings and videos), 1,000,000 words of transcribed data, and at least 200,000 words (around 72 hours) of completely annotated natural speech, is the first corpus dedicated to authentic, naturally occurring spoken discourse of Kazakh language. It contains speech collected from a different type of contexts, including conversations, interviews and spontaneous narratives, which provides a rich source for studying various linguistic categories such as evidentiality. Participants are different in age, regional background, and social group, which makes the analysis more reliable and diverse. The recordings’ participants gave their consent in advance; moreover, all data is anonymized before uploading into the corpus.

3.2. Procedure

The data was collected by analyzing the recordings and transcriptions from MCSKL corpus. There were some recordings without transcriptions, so the process of analyzing them is done manually, listening to each case and finding specific data. However, if the recording has transcription, it is analyzed through the ELAN app, a software tool for annotating audio and video recordings. Transcriptions are the textual representations of the recordings, which are transcribed in the way of intonation units segmentation. The speakers’ gender would be identified through the metadata collection of the Multimedia Corpus of Modern Spoken Kazakh Language.

3.3. Methods

In this paper, 300 minutes of recordings were analyzed: 150 minutes of male speakers and 150 minutes of female speakers. I did statistical analyses through the R studio, an environment for

programming R language, a tool for statistical analysis and graphics. The data collection was fulfilled with these steps: (1) listening and identifying each speaker, (2) measuring the recordings, (3) counting all occurrences of *-(I)p* and *eken* markers, (4) creating a CSV table with detailed information for each instance. After collecting data manually, I created a CSV format table with all data information, such as examples, gender, *eken* tokens, *-(I)p* tokens, and function. This table served as the primary dataset for statistical analysis and visualization:

Table 1

Example of the table for R studio environment

Examples	Evidential Marker	Function	Gender
Voobše ondayya qızığuşılıq žoq eken	<i>eken</i>	mirativity	female speaker
Tarazya barıp kelipti	<i>-(I)p</i>	hearsay	female speaker
Işinde subject testarī de boladī eken	<i>eken</i>	inference	female speaker
Maqul žemesem de boladī eken	<i>eken</i>	Direct perception	male speaker

Overall, the table has 139 rows of data. This coding is necessary to understand whether there is a distinction between evidentiality usage of male and female speakers. I decided to use ANOVA statistical test like Pan (2023) did in her paper. It tests if the mean of two groups are different. If the result would be $p > 0.05$, then it supports the null hypothesis, a starting assumption in research with ‘no effect’, ‘no difference’ structure. However, $p < 0.05$ rejects the null hypothesis so that it means that frequency of evidential marker usage depends on gender. In addition, the bar charts were created in R Studio to visualize the distribution of evidential markers in relation to frequency, providing a clear visual comparison between genders, functions and markers.

The Multimedia Corpus of Modern Spoken Kazakh Language has a lot of transcribed recordings in Cyrillic Kazakh language. After the Arabic script, in 1940, the Cyrillic alphabet was officially adopted under Soviet rule and has remained the main script for Kazakh in Kazakhstan. So, the research assistants in the Multimedia Corpus of Modern Spoken Kazakh Language use Cyrillic script for transcription of conversations in the recordings. Since I have 139 rows of data, the transliteration required extensive manual work, so I developed a web-based tool that automatically performs transliteration in one click, and named LingTranslit: <https://dee-alzh.github.io/LingTranslit/>. This website was used for quick and accurate transliteration of all instances of sentences with the *-(I)p* and *eken* evidential markers in the dataset.

The frequency analysis was made to check what gender uses evidentiality more often in natural speech. After that, the function of evidentiality markers usage was researched. Based on the data, the following examples of evidentiality usage were collected by analyzing different recording, which were total 300 minutes:

Table 2

Distribution of Evidential marker examples

Speakers	<i>eken</i>	<i>-(I)p</i>	Total
women	48	22	70
men	61	8	69

They were analyzed to identify in what cases Kazakh speakers use evidentiality and whether a gender impacts evidentiality usage. This also allows for examining whether certain functions of evidential

markers, such as mirativity, hearsay, inference and direct perception, are preferred by different genders: women and men.

3.4. Coding

In this research, the data were divided into two main categories according to evidential marker and gender:

Table 3

Categorization of data

By marker	By speaker's gender
Instances with suffix <i>-(I)p</i>	Female speakers
Instances with copula <i>eken</i>	Male speakers

The first dimension of coding involved the type of evidential marker in Kazakh language, namely the suffix *-(I)p* and copula *eken*. Instances of both markers were manually identified in transcribed data and recordings from the corpus. Each occurrence was recorded in terms of its timing, speaker's gender, and function. The next category focused on the gender of the speaker. The participants were classified as either female or male so that usage of evidential markers would be analyzed and compared across genders. By combining these two categories, it is possible to analyze both linguistic and social patterns in spoken Kazakh.

4. Results

4.1. Data

Based on the Multimedia Corpus of Modern Spoken Kazakh Language, I overall collected 30 recordings: 15 recordings of female speakers' conversations and 15 recordings of male speakers'. As a

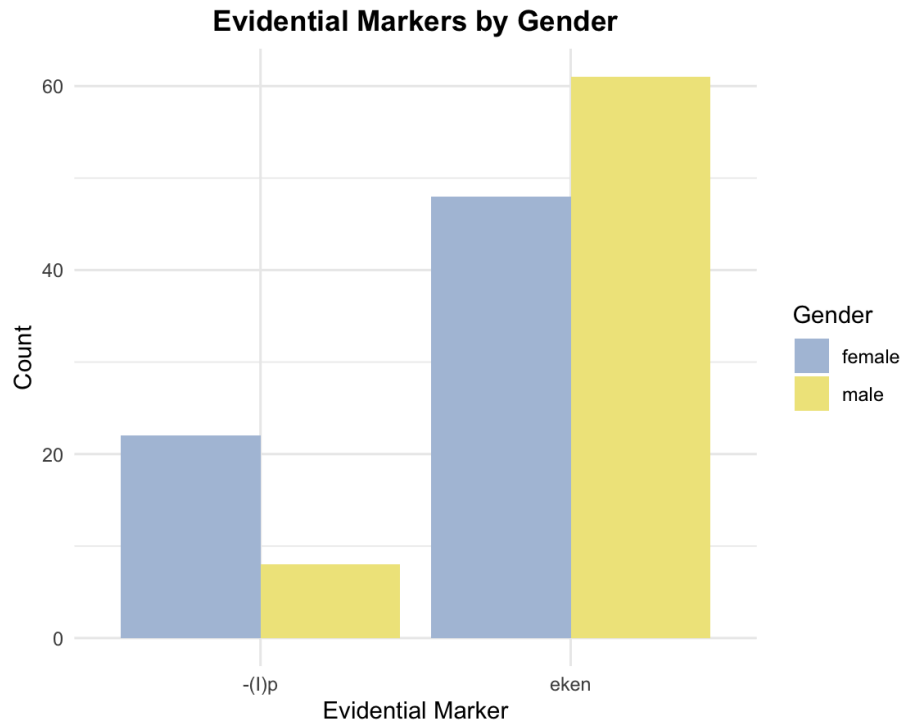
result, in 300 minutes of recordings, 60 speakers participated: 30 female participants and 30 male participants. The recordings of male and female speakers are equal in their time (duration) and number of participants. The interactions in the recordings are only between the same genders, in other words, male speakers were recorded with other male speakers, and female speakers with other female speakers. The overall time is 300 minutes, with 150 minutes of female recordings and 150 minutes of male recordings. So, each recording's duration is exactly 10 minutes. In total, I gathered 139 instances of evidential markers from all recordings, where 69 statements were produced by men and 70 by women. I did not expect that the amount of sentences with evidential markers would be almost equal, since I first gathered female speakers' recordings, and only after that I worked with male ones in a separate way. Since this study includes statistical analysis, the aim was finding 30 participants for each gender (30 is often considered a "safe" sample size).

4.2. Frequency

Reading previous works, this result was expected: female speakers use evidentiality more frequently in their speech than male speakers (Pan 2023; Söderqvist 2017). After analyzing a total of 300 minutes of recordings, I found out that male speakers used 69 evidential markers, while women used 70. Thus, the results are pretty balanced between two genders, which is in contrast to previous research results based on other languages, such as Salar, British English, and Kazakh as spoken in China.

In the chart below, the y-axis represents how many times the speakers used evidential markers, while the x-axis shows evidential markers in Kazakh language: *-(I)p* and *eken*. In all the charts below, I will use light blue to represent female speakers and yellow to represent male speakers.

Chart 1



According to this chart, Kazakh speakers generally prefer use of the *eken* evidential copula more than the evidential suffix *-(l)p*. The *eken* evidential marker is most commonly used by male speakers (61 times), while female speakers used it slightly less frequently (48 times). In contrast, the *-(l)p* evidential marker used more frequently among female speakers (22 times) than male speakers (8 times).

According to the results, women (70 times) still tend to use evidential markers more than men (69 times), but since the difference only in one instance, I would prefer to conclude that the use of evidential markers *-(l)p* and *eken* in spoken Kazakh is equal between males and females.

4.3. Functions and evidential markers *-(l)p* and *eken*

Charts 1-5 illustrate the distribution of evidential functions for the markers *-(l)p* and *eken*. The first and second charts present the functions of each marker separately, while the third and fourth charts show their distribution among female and male speakers, respectively. The fifth chart summarizes the use of both markers across genders. In the charts, the evidential suffix *-(l)p* has lavender color, while the evidential copula *eken* is represented by orange color.

The 2nd chart shows the evidential functions (direct perception, hearsay, inference, and mirativity) in relation to the evidential marker *-(I)p*. From this chart it can be observed that the hearsay function has the biggest amount of instances with the *-(I)p* marker (18 times). After that instances with mirativity function were used 7 times, while instances with the inference function were utilized only 4 times. In addition, there was only 1 instance with direct perception function. The low frequency of the direct perception function with the *-(I)p* marker is likely related to its inherent indirective semantics. In Kazakh, *-(I)p* tends to signal that the speaker did not directly witness the event, but rather learned about it through inference, report, or realization. In addition, *-(I)p* is primarily an inflectional suffix attached to verbs, marking inferential or reported information, often from a recently witnessed or indirectly inferred event. Since evidential copula *eken* is less tied to specific tense or aspect constraints, most speakers might find it more convenient in the usage for casual conversations. So, there are structural differences between *-(I)p* and *eken* evidential markers. Overall, the evidential marker *eken* is more flexible than the *-(I)p* suffix. The marker *eken* can be used in nominal predicate position, while *-(I)p* cannot. In addition, it is possible to add a tense or mood with the *eken* marker. In contrast, *-(I)p* has past meaning in it and there are structural incapability between other tense or mood suffixes. This all can be the reasons why people use *-(I)p* less than *eken* in spoken Kazakh.

The instances of *-(I)p* marker from the dataset:

(5) Hearsay:

<i>Adilya Temirovna nemere-si-n</i>	<i>uyıqta-t-ıp</i>	<i>qoy-ıp-tı</i>	<i>älgi</i>
Adilya Temirovna grandchild-POSS3-ACC	sleep-CAUS-CONV	AUX-EVID-3	that.one

‘That one apparently put Adilya Temirovna’s grandchild to sleep’

(Source: MCSKL)

The name and surname of the person (Adilya Temirovna) was changed due to confidentiality reasons. Since the speaker talked about another person (in this case, grandchild of Adilya Temirovna), this instance fits into the hearsay function description.

(6) Mirativity:

*Minaw foto-dan tüsir-ip qoy-**ip**-ti γoy*
 This photo-ABL take-CONV AUX-EVID-3 EMPH

‘(They) took it from this photo, apparently.’

(Source: MCSKL)

This sentence shows the mirativity function, as it represents a realization of certain information by a speaker during the conversation. It is seen from the emphasis *ğoy* that brings some emotional weight into the sentence. The speaker’s intonation also gives a reaction of realization.

(7) Direct Perception:

*Mayan tasta-p ket-**ip**-ti*
 To.me leave-CONV AUX-EVID-3

‘[Someone] left [something] to me’

(Source: MCSKL)

This is the only sentence with the direct perception function and evidential marker *-(I)p* in the dataset. It was decided that it represents direct perception, as according to its lexis *Mağan* (to.me) and semantic meaning, it shows that the speaker did witness this information (action) directly.

(8) Inference:

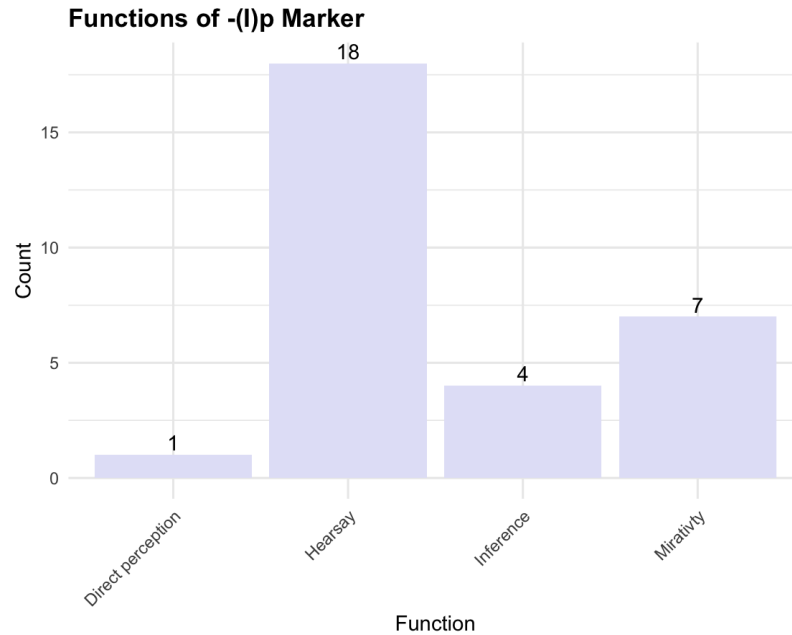
*Dollar-γa zor ket-**ip**-ti*
 dollar-DAT much go-EVID-3

‘it ended up being expensive in dollars’

(Source: MCSKL)

This is an instance of inference because the information was perceived indirectly (from the context). It is rather about calculated, estimated, or inferred knowledge from other cues.

Chart 2



Similarly, the 3rd chart presents the evidential functions, but with the evidential marker *eken*.

The pattern remains the same: hearsay is the most frequent, followed by mirativity, then inference, with direct perception being the least frequent. Nevertheless, since the *eken* marker is used much more often than the evidential marker *-(l)p*, the number of instances is higher. For example, the hearsay function has 33 instances of *eken* marker. The mirativity function occurred 29 times, while the inference function appeared in 28 instances, showing that both functions are highly frequent compared to direct perception in the dataset. However, although the direct perception function has the lowest number of instances, it still occurs a considerable number of times (19 instances). The examples of the evidential marker *eken* from the dataset:

(9) Hearsay:

<i>Sol</i>	<i>ekeu-i-men</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>klub-tiŋ</i>	<i>prezident-i</i>	<i>Muhammad</i>
That	two-POSS.3-with	that	club-GEN	president-POSS .3	Muhammad
Üšeui	de	president	eken		
Three-POSS.3	also	president	EVID.COP		

‘That the two of them, along with Muhammad, the three are also presidents of that club’

(Source: MCSKL)

This instance is telling about other three presidents (other people who are not participating in the conversation directly), so this sentence presents a hearsay function with an evidential marker *eken*.

(10) **Mirativity:**

<i>Žetpisiñši</i>	<i>žıl-dan</i>	<i>basta-p</i>	<i>tur-a-dī</i>	<i>eken</i>	<i>γoy</i>	<i>Almatī-da</i>
Seventieth year-ABL		start-CONV	AUX-PRS-3SG	EVID.COP	EMPH	Almaty-LOC

‘Apparently, [he/she/they] have been living in Almaty since 1970’

(Source: MCSKL)

In this glossed sentence, the sudden realization and slight surprise can be observed, as it looks like the speaker did not realize how many years another person lived in Almaty city. The speaker’s intonation also refers to mirativity function.

(11) **Direct perception:**

<i>Voobše</i>	<i>onday-γa</i>	<i>qızıǵuşıliq</i>	<i>žoq</i>	<i>eken</i>
In.general	that-DAT	interest	non-existing	EVID.COP

‘Apparently, there is no [my] interest in that’

(Source: MCSKL)

Here the speaker talks about his or her own interest, so the information is directly perceived by her or him. In other words, the person experienced something and understood that he or she is not interested in that.

(12) **Inference:**

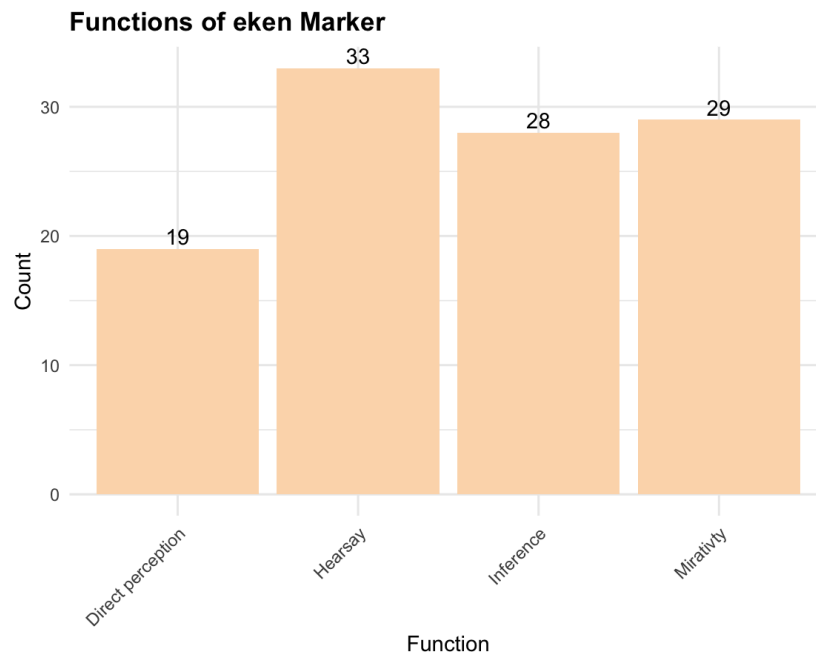
<i>Köp</i>	<i>närse</i>	<i>üyren-gen</i>	<i>eken-siñ</i>
Many	thing	learn-PERF	EVID.COP-2SG

‘You seem to have learned a lot of things’

(Source: MCSKL)

In the instance, the information was not directly witnessed by the speaker herself or himself. It rather seems that the speaker is concluding or deducing it, likely from evidence or context. So, the first speaker did see a certain result of the second speaker, and made a conclusion that the second speaker had learned a lot of things.

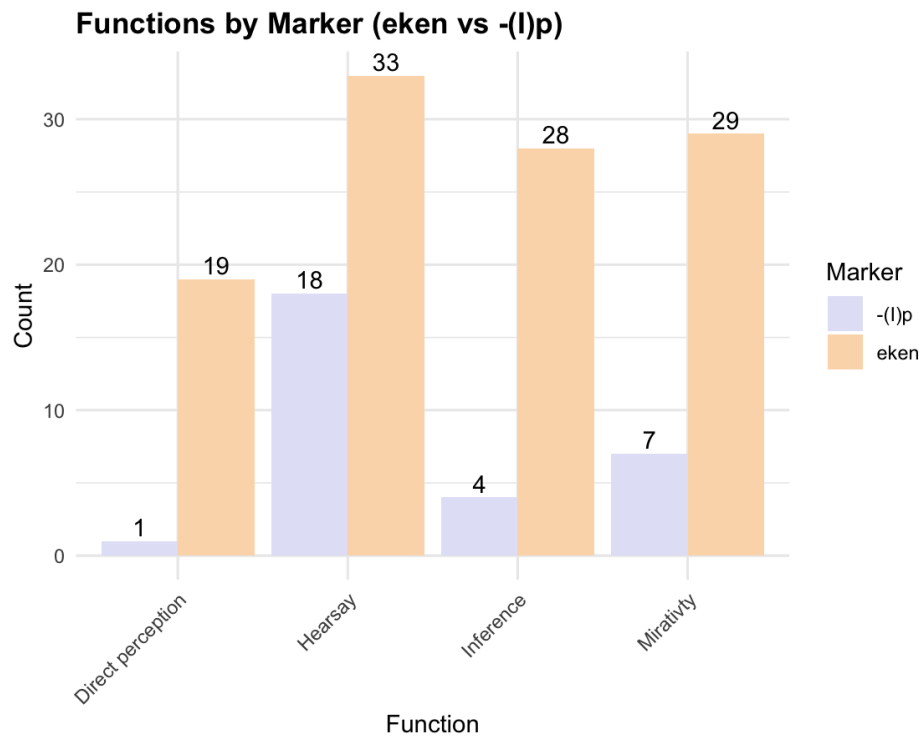
Chart 3



Overall, the 4th chart is a combined version of the two previous charts. It shows *-(I)p* and *eken* markers together in one chart so that their differences are clearly seen. With the help of this chart, the difference between bars of *eken* and *-(I)p* markers can be easily observed. The direct perception of marker *-(I)p* has 1 instance, while the same function with *eken* was used 19 times. As I mentioned before, there are structural differences between the *-(I)p* and *eken* evidential markers, which suggests that *eken* is a more flexible marker than *-(I)p*. Another reason why there is a distinction in frequency across evidential functions between the *-(I)p* and *eken* markers can be different pragmatic roles. This could indicate that *eken* is more naturally suited for expressing firsthand experiences, possibly because its form or usage context makes it easier for speakers to report what they personally observe. On the other hand, it may be because the evidential marker *-(I)p* is generally less frequent in the dataset or that

it tends to emphasize indirect knowledge rather than direct perception. The functions such as inference, mirativity and hearsay also occur more with the *eken* marker, which could suggest that *eken* is pragmatically flexible. Moreover, *eken* is less assertive than *-(l)p* evidential marker, so this can be a reason why Kazakh speakers may prefer the usage of *eken* marker. Overall, these differences likely reflect both inherent preferences in the use of the markers and the general frequency of each marker in the corpus: *eken* appears to be a more commonly used evidential marker, while *-(l)p* has a narrower functional distribution.

Chart 4

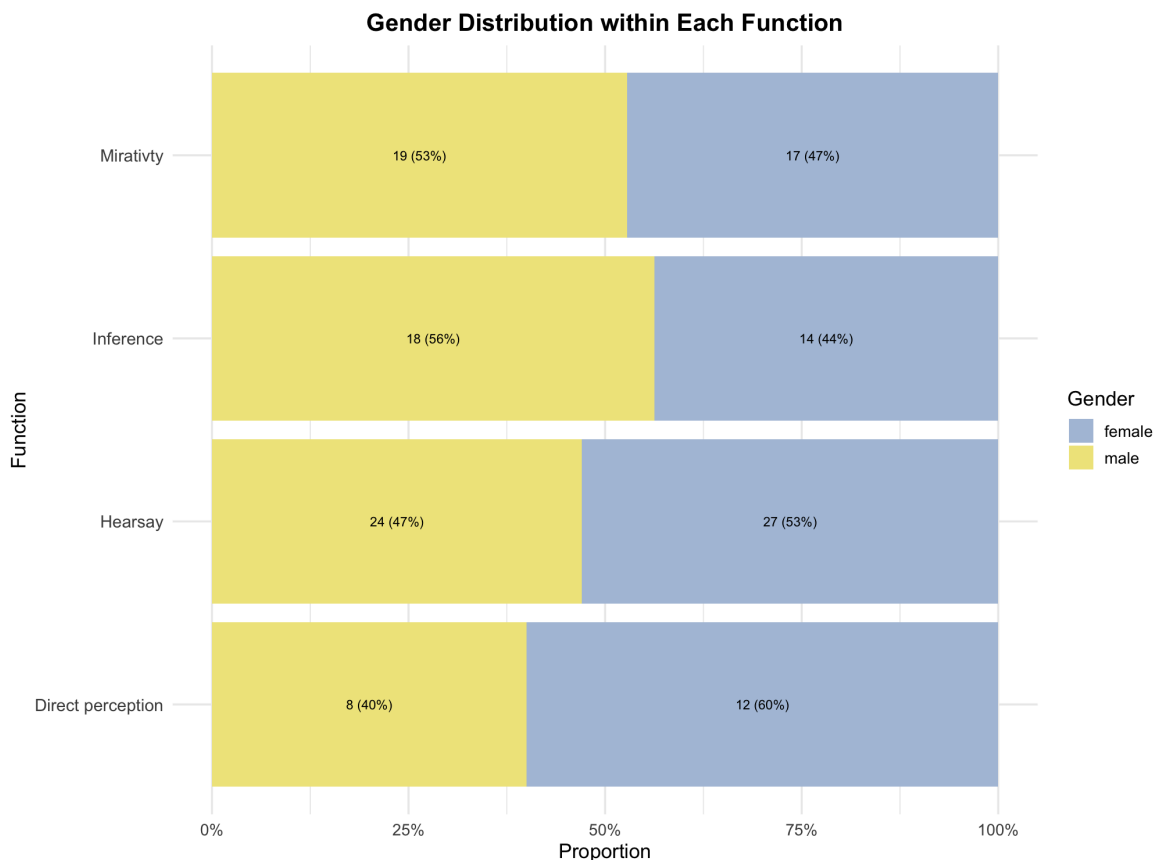


4.4. Function and Gender

I used R studio, a software tool for writing and running R code for data analysis, to conduct statistical analysis of the data. First of all, I decided to identify a correlation between Gender and Function. There are 4 functions of evidentiality: mirativity, hearsay, direct perception, and inference. I ran the Chi-square test, which is a statistical method used to find out whether there is a significant relationship between two categorical variables. In this case, they were Gender and Function. Based on

that, I calculated the p-value, which was ~ 0.664 . If the p-value is more than 0.05, it means that there is no significant correlation between two variables. This means that the distribution of evidential functions does not differ significantly between male and female speakers. Despite the fact that the Chi-square test did not reveal a statistically significant relationship between gender and evidential function ($p = 0.664$), this does not imply that the result is unimportant. Such results are common in statistical analysis and simply mean that no clear relationship was found in this dataset. In this case, the result suggests that the distribution of evidential functions is relatively similar across male and female speakers. This finding may indicate that gender is not a primary factor influencing the use of evidentiality. So, the following observations are descriptive rather than inferential. In the chart below, the y-axis represents the proportion percentage and x-axis represents the function type. This chart considers both evidential markers *-(I)p* and *eken* together.

Chart 5



Looking at the first bar, it is clear that men (53%) used more evidential markers to express mirativity a little more than women did (47%). The second bar shows that male speakers (56%) used inference more than male speakers (44%). The third bar shows that women (53%) used hearsay more than men (47%), but they are almost balanced. People use hearsay to represent knowledge they did not directly experience. So, speakers usually prefer using hearsay when trying to distance themselves from responsibility for the information. The reason is that the source is unknown. The last chart suggests that male speakers (40%) use a direct perception function of evidentiality much less frequently than female speakers (60%). Thus, female speakers use the evidential markers more in hearsay and direct perception functions, while male speakers use them more frequently in mirativity and inference functions. There is no huge percentage difference in all of these 4 charts, which shows a very balanced proportion between male and female speakers.

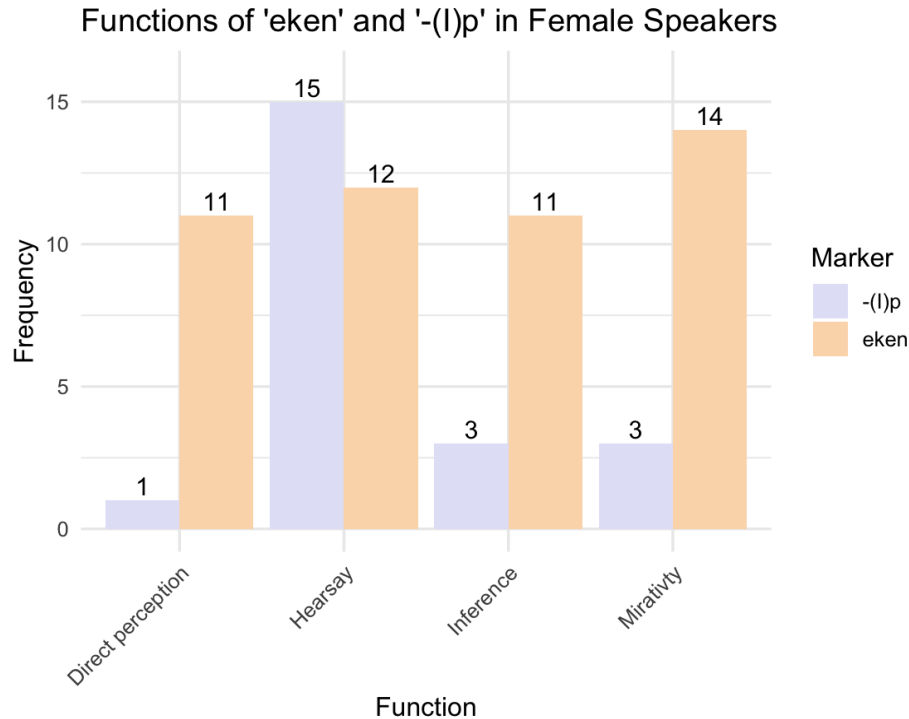
4.5. Functions, Genders, and evidential markers

Next two charts represent functions, genders and evidential markers: number of instances of certain functions in relation to the evidential markers *-(I)p* and *eken* within one gender category.

The 6th chart shows how female speakers use *-(I)p* and *eken* across four functions. In general, *eken* is used more frequently in most categories. It is especially common in direct perception, inference, and mirativity, where it clearly dominates over *-(I)p*. However, the hearsay function is different: *-(I)p* is used the most (15 times), even more than *eken marker* (12 times). This suggests that female speakers do not rely on only one marker but choose between them depending on the context. The higher use of *-(I)p* in hearsay may be because it can make speech sound more expressive or narrative, helping the speaker show involvement in what is being reported. Another reason can be that hearsay is related to non-confirmativity, meaning the speaker does not fully confirm the information and feels some distance from it, which would be very common for hearsay function. In other words, the evidential marker *-(I)p* may help to show that the information is reported or uncertain. This may explain why speakers often

prefer the *-(I)p* evidential suffix when sharing information through the hearsay function. Nevertheless, the *eken* evidential function is also often used in the sentences expressing the hearsay function. Thus, the choice between these two markers can be because of a speaker's personal preference, the certainty of information, or a context of the hearsay.

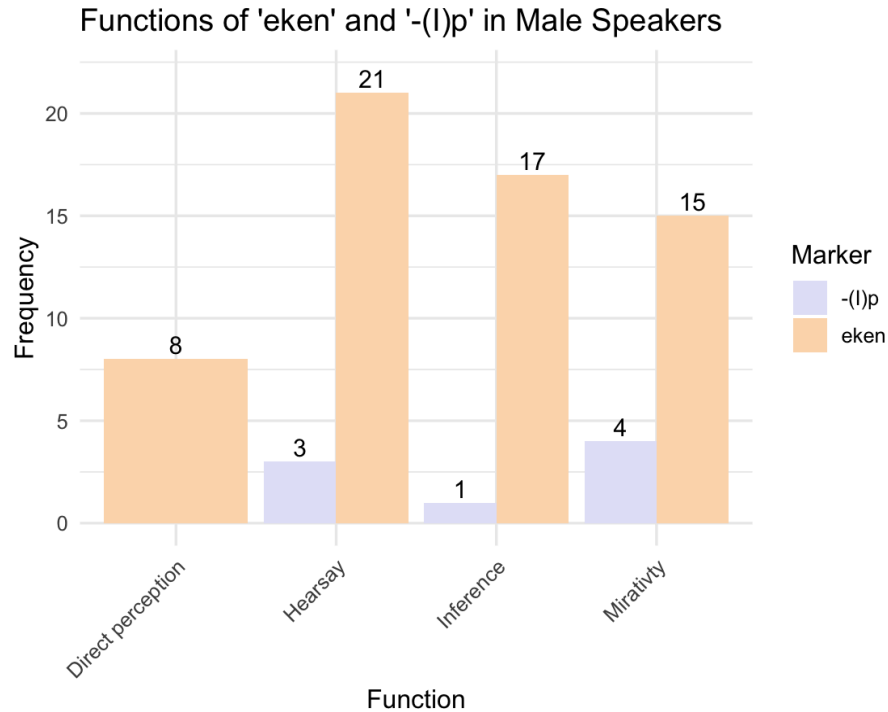
Chart 6



The next 7th chart presents the data for male speakers. In contrast to female speakers, men strongly prefer *eken* in all four functions. It has the highest frequency in every category, especially in hearsay, inference and mirativity. The use of *-(I)p* is consistently low and never exceeds *eken*. The direct perception function has no bar chart for the evidential marker *-(I)p*, as this inflectional suffix was not used at all in the direct perception function. Overall, the inflectional marker *-(I)p* was used only 8 times during 150 minutes of recordings and 30 male speakers. Despite the fact that the *-(I)p* suffix is convenient in usage in the hearsay contexts (due to its non-confirmativity effect), the male speakers still prefer the use of *eken* evidential marker (21 times). The number of usages of the *eken* marker for inference (17 times) and mirativity (15 times) functions are pretty similar and sufficient. Overall, this

shows that male speakers tend to rely on *eken* as a general evidential marker, using it across different contexts without much variation.

Chart 7



5. Discussion

Overall, this study examined the relationship between gender and evidentiality usage in spoken Kazakh of two evidential markers: the inflectional suffix *-(l)p* and the evidential copula *eken*. Using the data from the Multimedia Corpus of Modern Spoken Kazakh Language, the research explores how gender (female and male speakers) impact on the frequency of evidentiality use and the evidential functions in everyday conversations. The results provide information on how evidentiality, the grammatical category of the source of information, works in real-life conversations and how it connects with a speaker's gender.

5.1. Summary of the results

The most important finding is that both male speakers and female speakers use evidentiality similarly in the spoken Kazakh, so the frequency and functional distribution of evidentiality is almost the same. Other languages like Salar, British English, Kazakh as spoken in China had quite different results: female speakers use evidential markers more than male speakers in the conversations (Abish 2024; Söderqvist 2017; Pan 2023). However, although earlier studies suggested that women use more tentative language than men, some language and gender research demonstrate that gender differences in speech are often minimal or context-dependent (Park et al. 2016; Leaper & Robnett 2011).

Despite the fact that Kazakh as spoken in Kazakhstan has very balanced results in terms of function and frequency, there is still a difference in evidential markers *-(I)p* and *eken*: male speakers use *eken* more than females and female use *-(I)p* more than males. This difference may suggest that male and female speakers adopt slightly different strategies while expressing the source of information, evidentiality. The copula *eken* (occur in all four functions a lot) may allow male speakers to maintain a more evaluative or detached stance. Whereas, the suffix *-(I)p* (more appears in narrative contexts) may reflect a more descriptive or involved style among female speakers, so female speakers used *-(I)p* often in hearsay context. Nevertheless, in other 3 functions (inference, mirativity, and direct perception), female speakers also used mostly the evidential copula *eken*.

In comparison of the total amount of evidential marker usage, Kazakh speakers use *eken* (109 times) 3.6 times more frequently than *-(I)p* (30 times). The preference of usage *eken* may be as a general favored marker for information expression in the larger discourse context.

5.2. Theoretical implications

From a broader theoretical perspective, this study supports the idea that evidentiality is not only a grammatical category but also a discourse-pragmatic tool. So, while its main function is to show the source of information, the use of it in conversation may also depend on other factors such as gender, age, place, other speaker's gender, conversation type and so on. Leaper and Robnett (2011) previously stated that the different language use is often context dependent rather than completely based on a

gender. My findings support the idea that situational and social contexts, rather than speaker gender, play a larger role in determining how evidential markers are used. In modern Kazakhstan, traditional gendered patterns of speech may be slowly fading, leading to balanced and similar language of men and women. Moreover, the balanced usage patterns between male and female speakers may reflect a gradual shift in the traditional gendered speech norms in modern Kazakhstan, suggesting that social factors, rather than inherent gender differences, are more influential in shaping language usage. For example, in the Salar language, the society is mostly patriarchal (heavily influenced by Islam and patrilineal traditions, particularly in Qinghai and Gansu provinces of China), so as a result, female speakers use evidential markers more than males. This shows that the social meaning of evidential markers cannot be generalized across languages and must be studied within specific linguistic, social and cultural contexts. The obtained results contribute to typological research on Turkic languages by demonstrating the multifunctional nature of the evidential markers in Kazakh language.

5.3. Future direction of research

Despite all insights, this study has several limitations. The first is the amount of data, since the bigger amount of data would give more reliable results. So, collecting even more data would lead to better observation of evidentiality and gender correlation, especially in the function of direct perception. Second, the context analysis is still limited and cannot be sufficient at this stage, as the statistics analysis did not show a significant correlation. Due to time and data restrictions, there was not a possibility to analyze the age and place of the speakers. This means that factors such as age, regional background, and social status of speakers were not analyzed but could significantly influence the use of evidential markers. I believe that these are also very important categories to consider in future research.

Overall, there are several research ideas for future expansion of this research. One of the most interesting directions would be studying mixed-gender conversations. It would be beneficial to compare them with the same gender interactions to see how speakers adjust their evidential choices depending on their environment. It can reveal some new interactional patterns that it is possibly cannot

be seen in single gender conversations. For example, one gender may use less evidential markers in conversation with another gender for some reasons. It would be interesting to test whether it is true and if yes, then why this happens, what factors affect that.

The second idea is comparing evidentiality and gender use of Kazakh speakers from Kazakhstan and Kazakh speakers from China. Analyzing the data, I noticed that Kazakh speakers from China use much more evidential markers in their conversations. The reason can be different sociolinguistic environments or language contact effects. I believe this research would contribute to a better understanding of regional variation in Kazakh and evidentiality in Turkic languages.

Finally, future research could have a more detailed analysis of conversational contexts such as topics, formality and social relationships between speakers (family, friends, classmates, colleagues, unfamiliar people, etc.). It would help to better understand the pragmatic motivations behind the choice of evidentiality markers.

This research gives a lot of opportunities for further exploration in this field. In sum, the balanced use of evidential markers by male and female speakers suggests that traditional gender differences in language may be less pronounced than expected, pointing to a context dependent understanding of evidentiality in modern spoken Kazakh language in Kazakhstan.

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