Evidentials are expressions that signal the source of the semantically determined information conveyed by an utterance, such as perception, reasoning or hearsay. Generally, evidentials demonstrate a striking uniformity across a range environments regardless of the information source. In this talk, I focus on a cross-linguistically consistent difference between hearsay markers and other evidentials.

With hearsay evidentials in many languages, the speaker is not committed to the truth of the of the scope proposition and may even know it to be false. Previous approaches (Faller 2002, Murray 2014) derive the data but in an arbitrary fashion and thus fail to account for the following systematic gap: all non-hearsay evidentials require commitment.

I argue that the contrast in the presence of commitment stems from a more general difference that cross-cuts the grammar, the difference between doxastic attitudes and speech reports. The former are about private mental states and require commitment, while the latter report discourse moves and are often non-commitittal. I propose that optional commitment with hearsay markers is of the same nature and thus does not have to be built into their semantics. This explanation of the pattern is similar to the pragmatic account in (AnderBois 2014) but, as I will show, has conceptual and empirical advantages.