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The role of 'perspective' in epistemic marking☆

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Abstract

The paper focuses on inter-personal aspects of the context in the analysis of evidential and related epistemic marking systems. While evidentiality is defined by its capacity to qualify the speaker's indexical point of view in terms of information source, it is argued that other aspects of the context are important to analyze evidentiality both conceptually and grammatically. These distinct, analytical components concern the illocutionary status of a given marker and its scope properties. The importance of the hearer's point of view in pragmatics and semantics is well attested and constitutes a convincing argument for an increased emphasis on the perspective of the hearer/addressee in analyses of epistemic marking, such as evidentiality. The paper discusses available accounts of evidentials that attend to the perspective of the addressee and also introduces lesser-known epistemic marking systems that share a functional space with evidentiality.
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1. Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to discuss the overlooked function of perspective-taking in different forms of epistemic marking and how an ''epistemic perspective'' may feature more than one point of view (cf. Evans, 2005; section 3). In evidentials, for instance, aspects of meaning other than the speaker's 'information source' appear important both conceptually and grammatically. Such aspects of meaning concern inter-personal components of the speech situation, with special reference to the modeling of mental representations of other minds (see e.g. Givón, 2005). Consider the example below from Willett's (1991) description of Southeastern Tepehuan where there are two reported evidentials, *sac* and *sap* that differ in terms of whether the addressee is familiar with the report (*sac*) or not (*sap*; see also section 2.1):

Abbreviations: 1, first person; 2, second person; 3, third person; ABL, ablative; ADR, addressee perspective; ASYM, asymmetric; C, current evidence; CM.1, clause marker 1; CM.2, clause marker 2; COND, conditional; DAT, dative; DECL, declarative; DEM, demonstrative; DEP, dependent; DER, derived; DIM, diminutive; DUB, dubitative; DUR, durative; EGO, egophoric; FNS, final nominal suffix; FOC, focus; FUT, future; GKN, general knowledge evidential; HAB, habitual; IMPF, imperfective; INCP, inceptive; IND, independent; INF, infinitive; IRR, irrealis; LINK, linker; LOC, locative; MP, modal particle; NEG, negative; NOM, nominalizer; NON.EGO, non-egophoric; NSP, non-speech participant perspective; NVIS, non-visual evidential; O, object; OBLIG, obligation; OBS, observation; OR, orientation prefix; P, previous evidence; PFV, perfective; PL, (generic) plural; PN, person name; POT, potential; PROG, progressive; PRS, present; PRTC, participial; PS, possessive; PST, past; Q, interrogative marker; REDUP, reduplicative; REV, reverential; RS, reported speech evidential; S, subject; SNS, sensory; SOC, socialis; SPKR, speaker perspective; SYM, symmetric; VIS, visual evidential.

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(1) a. *Añ* *mĩ'-ñi* *dyɨr* *ja'c* *jim*
1S there-PRE from DIR come
na ***sac*** *jir-Járax* *Cham*
SUB REK EXS-crab place
'I'm coming from a place over there called ''Crab Place''. [as you already know]' (Willett, 1991:165 [author's added glosses in brackets])

b. *Ma'n* *mu-pai'* ***sap*** *quio* *gu* *ma'ncam*
one there-where REU live ART person
'(It is told that) there once lived a man in a certain place.' [informing] (164, [author's added glosses in brackets])

A traditional account of the reportative forms in Southeastern Tepehuan would fail to capture the ''known to hearer''/ ''unknown to hearer'' contrast as described by Willet. Although the presence of the hearer's/addressee's perspective in evidential forms must be separated from the notion of information source, as such, the relatively high degree of pragmatic influence on the interpretation of evidential meaning (see Curnow, 2003; Faller, 2002; Murray, 2011; Mushin, 2001, inter alia), means that this intersubjective component of the context should be considered in research on evidentials.

This paper argues for the relevance of 'perspective' as an important notion in attempts to analyze epistemic marking systems, like evidentiality. The presence of more than one perspective in some forms of epistemic marking motivates this proposal and 'perspective' may even be used to bridge apparently separate systems as interconnected within a larger functional domain (see section 5). Given this stated focus, other comparisons between epistemic systems will be less of a concern. For example: the long-standing argument over the precise relation between epistemic modality and evidentiality is not crucial to the arguments made and will consequently be largely skirted in the general discussion. Also, given the early stage of investigation of the systems discussed in this paper, it seems premature to outline the diachronic development of some of the forms discussed in the course of the paper. A basic separation between encoded and conveyed meaning is adhered to throughout the paper, although a clear distinction between the two is difficult to make in some cases (e.g. evidentials in interrogative contexts; see section 2.3). The semantic content of a form is usually discussed using the term 'meaning' since some of this content is pragmatically anchored and not propositional in nature.

The paper proceeds as follows: section 2 accounts for the addressee's perspective in evidentials, which may be separated into forms that occur with declaratives and ones that occur in interrogatives. Section 3 discusses epistemic marking systems that allow the speaker to situate information from the speaker's or the addressee's perspective. These and other systems typically operate side by side with evidentials (or in place of them) and are linked to evidential expressions in which meaning depends on inter-personal aspects of the context. In section 4, the notion of scope is discussed in relation to illocutionary/propositional meaning, along with a consideration of mitigation and illocutionary modification as important components of some epistemic marking strategies. In section 5, the notion of functional domain is introduced in order to provide the present investigation with a means to explicate the relationship between different categorizations of epistemic marking. Section 6 summarizes the paper with some concluding remarks.

2. Addressee-perspective/perceiver in evidential systems

The present paper is informed by typologically informed schematizations of evidentiality, such as Willett (1988), regarding basic conceptual divisions of evidential notions and the subsequent classification of evidential systems in Aikhenvald (2004). The investigation acknowledges the primary role of signaling 'information source' in evidential systems and regards evidentiality as conceptually separate from epistemic modality (but see section 5, below). However, it also agrees with Babel (2009) in that evidentials cannot be satisfactorily described without taking into account the context of their use in a communicative and social sense. The original contribution of the present paper is to relate evidentials to lesser-described forms of epistemic marking by focusing on the crucial role of inter-personal context in the analysis of both. In this section, the perspective of the addressee in evidentials is discussed using examples from the literature. It is found with distinct kinds of evidentials, ones that signal 'general knowledge' (section 2.1) and ones that include/focus on the perspective of the addressee in declarative (section 2.2) and in interrogative (section 2.3) contexts.

2.1. 'General knowledge'

Mamaindê (Nambikwaran, Brazil) has a 'general knowledge' marker, *-nĩnta/-ĩnta/-nta/*, which signals information that ''any adult native member of the community would know'' (Eberhard, 2009:463), including myths and world-knowledge that is considered beyond questioning. Consider example (2):

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