Evidentiality and interrogativity

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Abstract

Understanding of evidentials is incomplete without consideration of their behaviour in interrogative contexts. We discuss key formal, semantic, and pragmatic features of cross-linguistic variation concerning the use of evidential markers in interrogative clauses. Cross-linguistic data suggest that an exclusively speaker-centric view of evidentiality is not sufficient to explain the semantics of information source marking, as in many languages it is typical for evidentials in questions to represent addressee perspective. Comparison of evidentiality and the related phenomenon of egophoricity emphasises how knowledge-based linguistic systems reflect attention to the way knowledge is distributed among participants in the speech situation.
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1. Introduction

Interrogative utterances that are marked for evidentiality bring together two facets of the expression of epistemicity in language. Evidential morphology is usually understood as encoding the expression of knowledge, in particular, the source of information one has for a proposition (e.g., Anderson, 1986; Aikhenvald, 2004; Willet, 1988). Interrogative marking is typically associated with the speech act of questioning (Chisholm, 1984; Sadock and Zwicky, 1985), a central function of which is to request information that is not known to the speaker.[1] Evidential marking in interrogatives thus seems in some ways paradoxical, as the things we ask about are likely to be those things that we know little about. Indeed, evidentially marked interrogatives are reported to be infrequent in various languages (e.g., Maslova, 2003), and in some languages evidentials apparently cannot be used in interrogatives at all (e.g., Aikhenvald, 2004a). Yet many languages with evidentials *do* allow their occurrence in interrogatives. While little attention was paid to this distributional fact in early literature on evidentiality, our understanding of evidentials is incomplete without considering their behaviour in interrogative contexts, especially given that evidential markers can mean different things in questions than in statements (see, e.g., Aikhenvald, 2004a; Davis et al., 2007; Faller, 2002a; Garrett, 2001; de Schepper and de Hoop, 2012). We must be able to account for such differences and explain how evidential semantics are operationalised in the give-and-take of conversational interaction, the primary site of language use and change (Enfield and Levinson, 2006; Nuckolls and Michael, 2012). Evidential use in interrogatives is also essential to the issue of whether evidentials are considered deictic

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 [1] Although they may also accomplish many other things besides, see, e.g., de Ruiter (2012), Harris (1984), Levinson (1983), Searle (1969), Stivers et al. (2010).

(e.g., as explicitly argued by De Haan, 2005 and discussed by Hanks, 2012) and thus, perhaps, to our understanding of referential indexicals or 'shifter' categories (Jespersen, 1924; Jakobson, 1957) more generally.

In this paper, we develop a partial typology of evidentials in interrogative sentences (or 'interrogative evidentials' for short), building on earlier typological work (see especially Aikhenvald, 2004a:242–249) and charting cross-linguistic variation with respect to certain formal, semantic and pragmatic properties. Our data are drawn from field notes on Quechua (as spoken in Ecuador), Duna (Papua New Guinea) and two Barbacoan languages (Ecuador/Colombia), augmented with other sources concerning further relevant languages. Because, at least historically, there has been little systematic documentation of interrogative evidentials (one exception being the studies in Aikhenvald and Dixon, 2003), our survey is necessarily restricted in scope. A secondary objective of this paper is therefore to signpost areas in need of further documentation and analysis.

Example (1) is a (constructed) Duna question-answer pair that illustrates an evidentially marked interrogative clause. The question is formally marked as interrogative with the particle =*pe* and includes the evidential -*yarua* which indicates non-visual sensory information source (in this case, the sensation of internal temperature). The same morpheme is used in the (declarative) response.[2]

(1)   A: *ko   roro-**yarua**=pe*
                2SG   hot-SENS=INTER
                'Are you hot (you feel)?'
         B: *no   roro-**yarua***
                1SG   hot-SENS
                'I am hot (I feel).'

Examples such as (1) illustrate the importance of understanding evidentials as linguistic markers that not only supply information about information, but also relate that information to the participants in the speech situation. This is made possible (or inevitable) because of their 'perspectivising' quality. Evidentials encode perceptual or cognitive experience, presenting a situation "with reference to its perception by a conscious subject" (Johanson, 2000:61). The conceptual role of this conscious subject—the person who sees, hears, infers, and so on—has been labeled various ways in the literature, for example 'observer' (Aikhenvald, 2004a), 'experiencer' (Mushin, 2001), and 'evidential origo' (Brugman and Macaulay, 2010; Garrett, 2001). Speas (2004) goes so far as to argue that the 'witness' role projected by evidentials is in fact an implicit argument that can have syntactic reality in the clause (see also Speas and Tenny, 2003; Tenny, 2006).[3] But who is this witness? And is their identity specified as part of the meaning of the evidential (indexically or otherwise), or determined on an *ad hoc* basis?

The perceptual anchor of an information source marker in an independent clause is often co-identified with the speaker, so that the person talking chooses an evidential appropriate to his or her (espoused) perspective on the situation. For example, in (1), above, we understand that speaker B, in answering the question, uses the non-visual sensory evidential -*yarua* with reference to his or her own perceptual experience. The feature of 'speaker's evidence' has even been incorporated into definitions of evidentiality; Brugman and Macaulay (2010) found that 27 out of 38 sample definitions in the literature explicitly characterised the speaker as evidential origo. This is in keeping with a general expectation that subjectivity in language is concerned with *speaker* beliefs and attitudes (e.g., Lyons, 1982) and, more broadly, a possible cognitive bias toward egocentric perspective (e.g., Barr and Keysar, 2007; Rubio-Fernández, 2008). Some scholars have further argued that, through the association between speaker and evidential origo, evidentiality is in fact a deictic category that "fulfills the same function for marking relationships between speakers and actions/events that, say, demonstratives do for marking relationships within speakers and objects" (De Haan, 2005; see also Schlichter, 1986:56–58).

While speaker perspective may be the most prototypical in evidential usage, many studies of individual languages have indicated that an exclusively speaker-centric view of evidential perspective greatly oversimplifies the situation. For

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[2] Abbreviations in interlinear glosses follow those suggested in the Leipzig Glossing Rules (http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php) with the following additions: AG,agent; ASSERT, assertion; ATTR,attributive; DEP,dependent; DIR,directional prefix; DISC,discontinuative; EGO, egophoric; EV, best evidence; EXIS,existential; FP, far past; HS,hearsay; II,intransitive inanimate; INDB,indubitative; INF, inferential; INTER, interrogative marker; N.EGO, non-egophoric; PLN, place name; PROX, proximal; PSN, personal name; REAS, reasoning; REP, reportative; SENS, non-visual sensory; SPEC, specific; TI, transitive inanimate; UNC, uncertainty; VIS, visual; Y/N,yes/no question. Duna language examples are from San Roque's field notes and corpus (see also San Roque, 2008; San Roque and Loughnane, 2012). Ecuadorian Quechua and Cha'palaa examples are from Floyd's field notes and corpora (see also Floyd, 2005, 2010, 2011 for more general information on Cha'palaa and Ecuadorian Quechua), and Guambiano examples are from Norcliffe's field notes and corpus.

[3] In Jakobson (1957) terms and with respect to reported evidentiality, this role can be defined as a participant (the hearer) in the 'narrated speech event', P^ns. However, see also Kockelman (2004) and Mushin (2001) for different treatments of Jakobson's framework with respect to the evidential origo.