How to be pragmatic about pragmatic fieldwork?
Collecting representative data on epistemic discourse markers

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Structure

1. Epistemicity as a functional category
2. Epistemic discourse markers: definition
3. Epistemic fieldwork on Amazonian Kichwa
4. Summary
5. Directions of future work
Epistemicity as a functional category

- *Epistemicity* is concerned with expressions of knowing, including belief, attention, perceptual accessibility, attitude, and rights to knowledge, and the distribution of these among the speech-act participants.

- Epistemic/interpersonal meanings expressed cross-linguistically by discourse markers that are independent lexical elements in Spanish, Russian, Swedish, Japanese (Hayano 2011), fee enclitics in Quechua, ‘verbal enclitics’ in Yurakaré (Gipper 2008), 2P clitics in Katakaibo (Zariquey 2015), verbal prefixes in Kogi (Bergqvist 2017)…
Epistemic discourse markers: definition

- Discourse markers: expression that ‘bracket units of talk’ (Schiffrin 1987)
- Not-at-issue meaning
- Syntactic optionality
- Provide procedural cues for utterance interpretation
- Operate of ‘discourse level’ (Degand 2016)
- Epistemic DMs negotiate or index the role of the speaker and addressee with respect to the information conveyed (cf. Maschler & Schiffrin 2015, Grzech 2016)
**Epistemic discourse markers: example**
(Amazonian Kichwa, Quechuan, Ecuador)

a. miku-na tia-n
eat-NMLZ be-3
‘there is food’

b. miku-na tia-n=mi
eat-NMLZ be-3=MI
‘there is food’ (as I know and you did not know or expect)

c. miku-na tia-n=dá
eat-NMLZ be-3=DÁ
‘there is food’ (as I know, and you also expected)
Epistemic fieldwork on Amazonian Kichwa

- Initial fieldwork project focused on evidentiality
- Evidential distinctions in other Quechuan: direct/inferred/reported
- Evidentiality encoded by discourse clitics (independent of TAM)
- Initial fieldwork: language description, semantics of ‘evidentials’
- ‘Advanced’ fieldwork: properties of the epistemic paradigm, context of use, interaction with IS, interpersonal contexts
Epistemic fieldwork: challenges

Not-at-issue content

Semantics contribution | possibility | evidence | other
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(Palmer 2001, Boye 2012)

Whose TOI? (Kamio 1997)
Exclusive/shared knowledge? (Bergqvist 2017; Hintz & Hintz 2017)
Subjective? Intersubjective? (Michael 2008; Gipper 2011)
What kind of stance? (Mushin 2001; DuBois 2007)
Epistemic fieldwork: challenges of DMs

• Two main challenges: not-at-issue semantics & non-obligatoriness

• Low-frequency: most frequent clitic in 6% of turns

• Context of use as important as reasons for absence

• Inaccessible to meta-linguistic intuition of consultants

• Extreme importance of context -> elusive felicity judgements
Epistemic fieldwork: ‘recycling’ stimuli

- Mixed-method approach
- PhD fieldwork: little time to develop specific stimuli
- Unclear semantic/pragmatic distinctions to be targeted
- Use of stimuli designed for other purposes: “Pear Story” (Chafe 1980), interactive/narrative tasks from QUIS (Skopeteas et al. 2006), map tasks...
- Motivation: ease of interpretation, ability to control knowledge states, interactivity or presence of multiple perspectives
“Pear Stories” (Chafe 1980)

1st setup: 1 consultant, narrating the video as s/he watches

2nd setup: 2 consultants, 1 has already seen the video and tells it to the other, then they watch together and discuss

ADVANTAGES:
• Difference in epistemic authority
• Interactive
• Relatively culturally appropriate

DISADVANTAGES:
• No stake for participants
QUIS stimuli: fairy tales (Skopeteas et al. 2006)
QUIS stimuli: fairy tales  (Skopeteas et al. 2006)

Setup: 1 consultant, narrating the story from three perspectives:
- The parent
- The eldest child
- The youngest child

ADVANTAGES:
- Limited amount of background information
- Multiple perspectives on the same event

DISADVANTAGES:
- No stake for participants
- Not interactive
**QUIS stimuli: Stolen watch** (Skopeteas et al. 2006)

Setup: 2 participants, each watches a different video about the same event. Each video implies someone else stole a watch.

The consultants are asked to act as lawyers for the two accused.

**ADVANTAGES:**
- Conflicting claims to epistemic authority
- Limited amount to background information
- Some communicative stake for participant
- Interactive

**DISADVANTAGES:**
- Limited cultural appropriateness (German students on video)
Introducción

QUIS stimuli: *Stolen watch*  Wilma & Nilo
Summary & conclusions

• Epistemic discourse marking eludes systematic description because of its highly pragmatic meaning & non-obligatoriness

• Corpora & participant observation as source of hypotheses, to be tested in interactive elicitation, controlling for knowledge states

• Successful epistemic elicitation needs to create real communicative stakes: role plays, games (Silva & AnderBois 2016), excerpts from documentation...

• In (audio-)visual stimuli: importance of interpretative conventions
Future work: directions

- Theoretical work on the structure of epistemic domain: what are the different categories, how do they relate to one another?
- Comparing and contrasting fieldwork methods used on typologically diverse languages (watch this space)
- Appraising the cognitive reality behind our analysis of epistemic systems
Tack så mycket!
Thank you!
Ashka pagrachu!

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References


References cntd.


