Knowing in interaction: Fieldwork on epistemicity and intersubjectivity

Exploring Kogi epistemic marking in interactional elicitation tasks: A report from the field

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Outline

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- Engagement marking in Kogi

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The notion of ‘engagement’

- “A grammatical system for encoding the relative accessibility of an entity or state of affairs to the speaker and addressee”
(Evans et al. 2018)
- Various conceptions of accessibility, i.e. perceptual, epistemic, cognitive (e.g. attention, awareness, knowledge, epistemic rights, expectations...)
- Access to referents or state of affairs
- Intersubjectivity: indication of accessibility to speaker as well as to addressee, as estimated by the speaker
- Epistemicity: distribution of knowledge / epistemic authority

Joint attention demonstrative

- One of three demonstratives, first associated with addressee-proximity, reflects attentional contrast

(ad)nominal DEM	DISTANCE	
	close to SPKR	far from SAP
—	<i>hěhié</i>	<i>kwěhié</i>
+	<i>twěhié</i>	

- Example from elicitation:

A: *Kwěhié.* 'That one over there!' [pointing out one of the objects]

B: *Kwěhié?* 'That one over there?' [checking whether they have identified the right object]

A: *Aha, twěhié.* 'Yes, that one.' [confirming that B has identified the one A pointed out]

Joint access demonstrative

- The use of the form is dependent on a speaker's assumption about the addressee's attentional state
- *twěhié* is used, irrespective of distance, to refer to an object that is in the focus of attention of both speaker and addressee
- It cannot be used when joint attention is not yet established
- *twěhié* is also used for referents mentioned earlier in discourse > speaker assumes that referent is still accessible to addressee

Engagement prefixes

- A set of four verbal prefixes which signal (a)symmetries in access to a state of affairs between speech act participants (Bergqvist 2016)
- Two parameters
 - Perspective: whose knowledge/perception is at stake?
 - (A)symmetrical access: shared vs. non-shared

	Speaker perspective	Addressee perspective
Symmetric	<i>ni-</i>	<i>shi-</i>
Asymmetric	<i>na(k)-</i>	<i>sha-</i>

Engagement prefixes

(1)

hěhié=ki nahí gamá nzha (ni-ná)

DEM=SW 1SG.POSS bag SPKR.SYM-be

‘This is my bag.’ (cnc_el)

(2)

A girl says to her younger brother who mistakenly took her school bag:

nahí nak-ldá!

1SG.POSS SPKR.ASYM-be

‘That's mine!’ (obs)

Characteristics of engagement prefixes

- Resources for argumentation, negotiation, indicating unexpected information, directing attention, claiming epistemic rights, enquiring about mental states...
- Not obligatory: unmarked/differently marked alternatives
- Used in contexts in which a speaker wishes to epistemically qualify a proposition
- Use is dependent on genre, age / social status of speakers, discourse structure
- Comparable to modal particles (e.g. Germanic languages)
- Semantics/function of such forms is often opaque to speakers

How to explore engagement in Kogi?

- ENG forms are infrequent in elicited materials from initial research phase (i.e. translated utterances, elicited narratives either free or stimuli-based)
- Contexts arise in verbal interaction between actual speakers in which (a)symmetries in perceptual/epistemic access exist

Ideal data:

- naturally occurring speech
- face-to-face interaction, referring to objects / state of affairs in speech situation
- conversations concerning personal knowledge / experiences / opinions

How to explore engagement in Kogi?

- Challenges of obtaining/working with naturally occurring speech...
- Opportunities of interactional, stimuli-based elicitation tasks
 - Fairly natural conversational data
 - Designed to target certain topics or expressions
 - (A)symmetries in access given by task design
 - Problem solving that induces verbal negotiation, argumentation, question-answer sequences

Interactional elicitation tasks

- Shape Classifier Task
- The Difference Task
- Family Problems Picture Task
- (Positional Verbs matcher-director task [Ameka et al. 1999, Hellwig 2006])

Shape Classifier Task

- Variation of shape classifier task (Seifart 2003)
- Inspired by study on Jahai demonstratives (Burenhult 2003)
- 25 objects of various shapes and sizes, a subset is depicted in picture
- Asymmetrical access: Director has access to pictures, while matcher does not
- Demonstratives, asymmetric prefixes

Shape Classifier Task

The difference task

- Based on Enfield & de Ruiter (2003)
- Original task designed to investigate aspects of multimodal interaction
- 10 Pairs of almost identical pictures
- Participants need to spot the difference
- No interactional asymmetry inherent in the director-matcher design
- Symmetric prefixes

The Family Problems Picture Task

- Collaborative story-building /-telling
(San Roque et al. 2012)

The Family Problems Picture Task

- Four phases:
 - I. Description of each picture
 - II. Organization of cards into a coherent narrative
 - III. Third-person narrative to an audience
 - IV. First-person narrative
- Depictions of socially-pregnant and emotionally-charged situations
- The four phases induce different language choices, e.g. descriptions, conversations, narrative discourse, reported speech

Results

- Fewer instances of ENG marking than anticipated, yet they are in line with hypotheses

Demonstratives

- Used extensively in the ShaClaTa, to some extent in FPPT
- Evidence for demonstrative that is licensed by joint access

Engagement prefixes

- Only some in matching tasks – no correlation with task design (symmetric vs. asymmetric access to stimuli)
- Most prominent in FPPT, particularly in reported speech

Example: ShaClaTask

(3)

D: *ezwa ama kēyakēyá-gatse naldatshak zumēya tū gatse*
one uhm edged-seem be.but star look look.like
'One, uhm, with edges but it looks like a star.'

M: *kēyakēyá gatse naldatshak zumēya tū gatse*
edged look.like be.but star look look.like
'One with edges but it looks like a star.'

meilde sha-hangu-kú, zumēya tū-gatse?
which.one ADDR.ASYM-think-1SG star look-seem
'Which one may it be (lit: I think)? It looks like a star?'

D: *hai hē nzha (ni-na) ni-hangu-kú hai kēyakēyá gatse hai*
DEM DEM SPKR.SYM.be SPKR.SYM-think-1SG DEM edged look DEM
'Here, it's this one, I think [gestures with lips]. Here, the one with the edges, here.'

Example: ShaClaTask

M: *kěyakěyá-gatse naldachák hui hukase, hěnié?*
edged-seem but house roof, DEM
'With edges but like the roof of a house, this one?'

D: *twē shi-nalda*
DEM ADDR.SYM-be
'Is it that one?'

ě=ki makěwã ak-ldukka ezwa mozhwa twē=ki maigwa mechwi
DEM=SW four 3SG.IO-be one two DEM=SW three only
'This one [in the picture] has four sides, but that one only has three.'

twē tūgatse ama tweka mua-ka pa nak-ldo
DEM look-seem uhm DEM middle=LOC be.FLAT SPKR.ASYM-be.located
'It's similar to that one, uhm, it's there in the middle!'

Example: ShaClaTask

M: *hěnié?*
DEM
‘This one?’

D: *ese **twē***
DEM DEM
‘[Yes] that one.’

(kog_170826_sct3-2)

Examples: DiffTask

(4) *hi* ***shi**-tũ-kú?*

what ADDR.SYM-see-1SG.SUBJ.PRS

‘What is it? (lit.: What do I see?)’

(5) *malakze hangwa* ***ni**-gu-kú*

sweet think SKPR.SYM-do-1SG.SUBJ.PRS

‘It's candy, I think.’

(LCZ_32)

Example: DiffTask

DiffTask (LGN_7-11)

A: *bakka zhawa*
'A little cow.'

B: *mh no inzhi zhawa nakaldini hi zhawa*
'No, there's a yuca root, then what?'

A: *bakka zhawa*
'A little cow.'

B: *relo zhawa nenka **nakldá** [SPKR.ASYM]*
'There's a clock!'

A: *ah ah baka zhawa*
'No, a little cow.'

Examples: FPPT

(5)

*heki atshi-ka **nak**-ldá mihí munzhi*
DEM do-PRS **SPKR.ASYM**-be 2SG.POSS woman

ak-běya-té

3SG.IOBJ-say-IPFV

“This is what your wife does [without you knowing].”, he is telling him.’

(fppt1-1_cnc)

Examples: FPPT

(fppt1-3_cnc)

(3)

ekí sigí na ma-wa-tũ-ne

DEM.ADV man with 2SG.DO-3PL.SJ-see-PST

nag-a-bě-ne nalda shã (shi-na)

1SG.IO-3PL.SJ-tell-PST be ADDR.SYM.be

[Man:] ‘They saw you like this with another man, is that so?’

no z-häbbia-l nuka ne-nuge nzha (ni-na)

no INTR-buy-PURP only go-1SG.PST SPKR.SYM.be

[Woman:] ‘No, I just went to buy [something].’

Conclusions

- Fewer instances of ENG marking than anticipated, yet they are in line with hypotheses
 - Evidence for joint access demonstrative in ShaClaTa
 - Instances of ENG prefixes in contexts of convincing, unexpected information, disputes
 - Use of ENG prefixes in reported conversations (FPPT)
- Limitations
 - Naturalistic interactions, yet artificial setting / topics
 - Low frequency of ENG markers due to low personal investment in and low complexity of matching tasks

Outlook

- ENG markers in reported conversations
- Contexts of gossip, arguments, accusation

Outlook

- Planned interactional elicitation task based on Senft (2003)
"Reasoning in language"
- Original task investigates how speakers "verbally reason about moral issues"
- Moral problems presented in open story plots or scenarios that require a solution
- Plots are aimed to present common conflicts in societies and human behaviour
- Discussion about personal opinions and social norms

Outlook

- Stimuli: Unfinished short stories / descriptions of problems
- Participants: Native speaker interviewer, and at least two speakers
- Procedure: Interviewer presents scenario, solicits discussion of possible outcome/solution and imagined conversations

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