Low frequency items in descriptive grammars:
A case study of epistemic discourse markers

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Structure

1. Statement of the problems

2. Epistemic marking in the grammar

3. Case study: epistemic markers in Upper Napo Kichwa

4. Description of epistemics and descriptive grammars

5. Possible solutions

Problem I: focus on morphosyntax

- Volumes on grammar-writing (Payne 1997, Schachter & Shopen 2007) and handbooks for field linguists (e.g. Chelliah & de Reuse 2011) focus on describing morphosyntax

- Elicitation still seen as primary technique for collecting data for grammars

- Focus on grammatical categories/comparative concepts - important for <u>grammaticality of sentences</u>

- Much less emphasis on semantic categories and <u>felicity of utterances</u>

Problem II: focus on the obligatory

Grammatical: discursively secondary, not necessarily obligatory (Boye & Harder 2012)

- Primary focus on derivation and inflection

- Other grammatical items more likely to be included if occurring with high frequency

- Low frequency, or 'genre-specific' (Kittila et al. 2018: 282) pushed to fringes

- ?Purpose of descriptive/reference grammars

Epistemic marking in the grammar

Epistemicity is concerned with <u>expressions of knowing</u>, including:

- ✓ certainty
- ✓ perceptual accessibility
- ✓ belief
- ✓ attention
- ✓ integration of information into one's knowledge base
- ✓ attitudes and rights to knowledge
- ✓ ……

and the distribution of all these among the speech-act participants (e.g. Stivers et al. 2011).

Epistemic marking in the grammar

Fused with TAM morphology, e.g. Jarawara (Arawá, Brazil) (Dixon 2004)

Separate paradigm, e.g. Kogi (Arawako, Colombia) (Bergqvist 2012, 2017)

'Verbal enclitics', e.g. Yurakaré (isolate, Bolivia) (Gipper 2011)

2P clitics, e.g. Katakaibo (Panoan, Peru) (Zariquey 2015)

Enclitics with no fixed position e.g. Quechuan languages
(Floyd 1997, Faller 2002, Grzech 2016)

Lexical items, e.g. Romance, Japanese…

Epistemic discourse markers: examples
(Upper Napo Kichwa, Quechuan, Ecuador)

1.   miku-na   tia-n
         eat-NMLZ   be-3
         'there is food'

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

3.   miku-na   tia-n**=dá**
         eat-NMLZ   be-3**=DÁ**
         'there is food' (as I know, and you also expected)

Epistemic discourse markers: example
(Upper Napo Kichwa, Quechuan, Ecuador)

4.   kan... kan=**mi** api-ka-ngui kan... kan!
        2SG   2SG**=MI**   grab-PST-2   2SG   2SG
        'You took [it, it was] you, you!' el_02122014_05 021

5.   uku-ma   tia-k   chundzulli-guna-ndi shamu-kpi,
        inside-DAT be-AG.NMLZ intestines-PL-INCL   come-SWREF

        yapa**=mi**   ismu-n.
        much**=MI**   rot-3
        '[if one] brings [the kill from the hunt] with the intestines, it will rot quickly [lit. much]' KICHB07AGOPEDROCHIMBO1 446

Epistemic discourse markers: definition

- Not-at-issue meaning

- Syntactic optionality

- 'Bracket units of talk' (Schiffrin 1987): provide procedural cues for utterance interpretation

- Operate of 'discourse level' (Degand 2016)

- Negotiate or index the role of the speaker and addressee with respect to the information conveyed (cf. Maschler & Schiffrin 2015, Grzech 2016)

Epistemic DMs in UNK: assumptions

- Initial fieldwork project focused on evidentiality

- Evidential distinctions in other Quechuan: direct/inferred/reported

- Previous descriptions, typological literature -> assumption of an obligatory system

- **BUT** only marginally described in grammars of all Quechuan varieties to date

Epistemic DMs in UNK: facts

- Evidentiality not crucial for semantics of markers

- Epistemic authority as core semantic meaning

- Encoded by discourse clitics (independent of TAM)

- Occurrence possible on any phrasal head

- No co-occurrence on same host

- Much less frequent than in other varieties

- **Central to native-like mastery of the language**

Epistemic DMs: issues for grammar-writing

- Not at-issue semantics

- Syntactic non-obligatoriness

- Most frequent clitic in 6% of turns (sample of 1530 turns)

- Inaccessible to meta-linguistic intuition

- Extreme importance of context -> elusive felicity judgements

- Hard to gather negative evidence -> unfolding of interaction as major interpretative cue

Epistemic DMs: issues for grammar-writing

- In elicitation-based grammars: data would need to come from different source

- For corpus-based grammars: issue of delimiting relevant aspects of the contexts

- For all grammars: issues of pragmatics seen as marginal

Epistemic DMs: issues for grammar-writing

§ 32. *Suffixes Denoting the Source of Information* (Nos. 132–135)

132. -*ˤl(a)* IT IS SAID [WORD-s.].
xɛ'nʟɛɢlaˤl very much, it is said 7.3
k·!ē's⁴lat!a but not, it is said 8.10 (see no. 101)
lā'ˤlaē then, it it is said, he—(passim)

133. -*Emskᵘ* AS I TOLD YOU BEFORE [WORD-s.].
g·ā'xɛmskᵘ he has come—as you ought to know, since I told you
before

134. -*Eng·a* IN A DREAM [WORD-s.].
laɛ'ng·a in a dream it was seen that he went X 173.40

135. -*xEnt* EVIDENTLY (as is shown by evidence) [WORD-s.].
k·!eâ'saaxɛnt evidently nothing 73.18
k·!ē'sxɛnt evidently not 148.15

Treatment of evidentials in Boas 1911: 496 (Kwakuitl data)

Epistemic DMs descriptive grammars: advantages

- Insight actual language use

- Interpretative cue for texts (similarly to IS)

- Increased value for some future users, e.g. heritage speakers

- Typology: less comparative potential if only 'proper' TAME is described
           aspects of variation potentially overlooked

- Documentation: pragmatics often lost first

Possible solutions

- In training documenters: expand the desired scope of grammars

- Potential "discourse" chapters could include both epistemic DMs and description of main IS devices

- Function-driven description: mention epistemic DMs when discussing modality etc.

- Commentary on text attached to grammars

- Inclusion of unsimiplified examples with full context

Kiitos!

Thank you!

Ashka pagrachu!

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