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Looks Like a Duck, Quacks Like a Hand: Tools for eliciting evidential and epistemic distinctions, with examples from Lamjung Yolmo (Tibetic, Nepal)

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Abstract

This article describes the use of eight research tools used in the documentation of evidential and modal use in Lamjung Yolmo, a Tibeto-Burman language of Nepal. For each tool, the methodology is described, and some examples of the usefulness and limitations are discussed. The methods include use of existing and novel tools and materials. Image tasks included the existing resources ‘Family Problem Picture Task’ and ‘Jackal and Crow’, as well as optical illusions. Object tasks included the ‘hidden objects’ game and magic tricks. Listening and talking tasks included the game ‘twenty questions’, reporting previous speech, and a grammaticality judgement task based on multiple reports. Making research methods more transparent, and the open sharing of data and materials, allows us to move forward with better understanding of the contexts of evidential use, and more nuanced cross-linguistic typological analysis of evidential systems.

Key words: Tibeto-Burman, Nepal, evidentiality, modality, methodology

1 Introduction

The evidential and epistemic choices that people make are dependent on context. Naturalistic data and elicitation are not necessarily mutually exclusive research methods, but points on a cline. In the documentation of the Lamjung variety of Yolmo (Southern Tibetic, Nepal) I used both of these methods, but each has their shortfalls. Spontaneous examples, from observation or narrative, demonstrated what forms people use in everyday speech, but were often so embedded in a particular context that it was difficult to understand why a particular form was used, both for myself and the participants in the interaction. Sentential elicitation provided a quick introduction to the major evidential categories, and broad semantic distinction between them, but speakers are not always able to articulate reasons for choices, and sometimes found it difficult to give an answer without the grounding of a situational context. In the middle are possibilities for methodologies that elicit naturalistic language use, but which present constraints that allow the researcher to make better hypotheses about the language. For evidentiality and epistemicity, tasks which shape or constrain the access to information that speakers have, allow us to make better hypotheses about the motivations for the choices speakers make. For this reason, they became central to my work on the evidential system in Lamjung Yolmo. See Gipper (this volume) and Knuchel (this volume) for other examples.

The typology of evidential systems cross-linguistically is increasingly well-documented (Aikhenvald 2003, 2004, 2018). However, there is still a great deal of opportunity for improving the transparency of research methodology around evidential elicitation and analysis. This volume is an important contribution in this direction. One thing that is apparent in it, is that researchers working to understand the complexities of evidentiality, epistemicity and related concepts in specific languages, grapple with the complexities of context, epistemic authority and knowledge state for interactional participants (see Grzech, Schultze-Berndt and Bergqvist, this volume). Critical and transparent approaches to methodology allow us to consider more nuanced analyses of specific languages in ways which are easier to compare, which enriches our typological understanding of these phenomena.

My contribution is to discuss the methodology and outcomes from a number of tools and tasks that I developed or adopted while documenting the modal system of Lamjung Yolmo, a Tibeto-Burman language of Nepal.

Like many languages of the Tibetic subgroup of this family, Lamjung Yolmo has a

rich and contextually nuanced evidential and epistemic system (Gawne 2016a). To understand evidentiality, its use, and relationship to other grammatical features, a variety of strategies are needed. Elicitation and analysis of naturalistic materials can yield complementary data and insights. As Bybee and Fleischman (1995: 8) note, face-to-face naturalistic narrative is optimal for collection of rich modal data, but only collecting narrative and interactional data is insufficient. As Joseph (2003: 318) observes, when it comes to grammatical features like evidentiality, there are specific situations that are rare naturalistically, and there is also a need to use negative evidence as to the grammatical viability of certain forms in certain situations.

In this article I discuss tasks that I group into three broad themes. The first are image tasks, including the Family Problem Picture Task (San Roque et al. 2012), and Jackal and Crow (Kelly and Gawne 2011), as well as optical illusions. The second type are object-based tasks, including magic tricks and Vokurková's (2008) 'hidden objects' task. The final group are interactional tasks, including the classic children's game 'twenty questions', the use of existing recordings to make a 'reported speech on the phone' activity and a 'multiple reports' elicitation judgement task. Some of these tools were developed to test particular evidential preferences (for optical illusions, the relationship between the sensory and personal evidentials), while others were developed to examine the relationship between evidentiality and other grammatical structures (evidentiality and questions in twenty questions). I include discussion of ways that these tools were successful, but also what limitations or issues I encountered in their use.

By sharing our research methods, how they work and where they fell short of our intentions, we can work towards building more comparable research tools, and create more comparable data, to further our understanding of the nuances of evidential use cross-linguistically.

2 Using tools to elicit evidentials

Existing narrative tasks like The Pear Story (Chafe 1980) or Frog Story (Mayer 1969) offer event-rich narratives with an existing literature of analysis for comparison with other languages. This might provide a good starting point, particularly if these narratives have already been collected in related languages, but you do not have to be constrained by existing research tools, especially if there are particular nuances or distinctions you are trying to capture.

There is a small, but growing, literature that includes explicit description of research methods to elicit evidentiality. Silva and AnderBois (2016) had success with using the game

Mastermind in their research on Desano, an Eastern Tukanoan language of the Vaupés Region of Brazil and Colombia, and described both their research methods and an analysis of the data the game generated. Mastermind was invented by Mordecai Meierowitz in 1970 and involves one player attempting to guess the combination of four coloured pegs that their opponent has selected. Silva and AnderBois (2016) chose this task to generate examples of inferring evidentials and epistemic modals, inspired by recent literature that also uses this task, including work on English modals (von Stechow and Gillies 2007) and evidentials in St'át'imcets (Matthewson et al. 2007). To ensure there was enough discourse data, the researchers had pairs of 'codebreakers' who would talk together to try and figure out the mastermind's code. Sessions were video recorded so that the state of play could be observed to correlate with evidential and epistemic choices. Such examples of successful tasks are useful for researchers interested in the structure of particular phenomena, and those seeking inspiration in their own language documentation research.

In line with the rationale for this volume, it is important that researchers not only discuss the methods that they had success with, but also those that failed, either in their deployment or in that they did not capture the type of evidential use that was intended. This allows us to collectively learn from each other's experiences and continue to iterate and develop the best possible set of shared tools. See, for an example of reported failure, Garrett and Bateman (2007), where participants watched video stimuli and were prompted with questions that were intended to evoke different evidential values. They hypothesised, based on their existing understanding of speaker-intuitions from earlier elicitation, that questions about the videos with the sensory evidential *'dug* would yield answers which were direct descriptions of the visual action, while the inferential evidential *yod.red* would result in answers with an additional layer of inferential reasoning about the activity being performed. They found that their hypothesis did not hold up, and that the evidential type in the question did not influence the content of the answers.

A focus on research methods in evidential studies is part of a wider turn within the field of linguistics towards making the data that underpins linguistic analysis more open and transparent (Berez-Kroeker et al. 2018). While this special issue focuses exclusively on research methods in epistemic and evidential studies, ideally all research on these topics would make explicit what kind of data they draw upon and make that underlying data available to scrutiny. The papers in this volume demonstrate that interactional context is of vital importance to understanding evidential and epistemic choices. Allowing other researchers to see the larger context behind examples can help build this more nuanced approach to analysis of these phenomena.

3 Data presented in this paper

The data presented in this paper was collected for my PhD research (Gawne 2013) over a two-and-a-half-year period on three separate field trips to Nepal, totalling 10 months (September to December 2009, September 2010 to February 2011 and January to March 2012). In this paper I specifically focus on the data I collected using elicitation tools and methods, but data collection in this period also included grammatical elicitation and unstructured narrative and conversational recordings. This documentation was curated in a language documentation corpus, archived with PARADISEC (Gawne 2009). Some materials are open access, while others require permission to be accessed (I discuss the reasons for this in Gawne 2015a).

Examples presented in this paper are drawn from that corpus. Each example includes a citation, which includes the speaker initials, the archival file number of the recording and a timecode. The file number is also the date on which the recording was made, so LG1-101027-01 was the first recording made on the 27th of October 2010.

Research materials that were not able to be archived are also cited in this paper, or where relevant I have cited the original publication where the materials are available. In cases where this is not possible, such as the magic tricks which used purchased materials, I have attempted to give enough information to allow for replication of the task.

4 Evidentiality in Lamjung Yolmo

In this section, I provide an overview of the evidential and epistemic system of Lamjung Yolmo. Like many Tibetic languages, the Yolmo varieties have multiple evidential and epistemic distinctions (Tournadre 2017), some of which are familiar within the broader evidential literature and some of which are only common in the Tibeto-Burman family. This introduction is intended to help explain some of the motivations for the tools and tasks that I used in my analysis.

Lamjung Yolmo makes evidential and epistemic distinctions in the copula forms, which are also used as auxiliaries in complex verb phrases. These copulas are outlined in Table 1. The columns represent the different semantic distinctions made in the copula set. The negative form is presented beneath each affirmative form, and italicised. There is also a reportative that is not part of this paradigm, but a clause final particle (*ló*).

Table 1: The Lamjung Yolmo copula system

	Personal	Dubitative	Sensory	General fact
Equation	yimba <i>mìn</i>	yindo <i>mìndo</i>	(dùba) <i>(mìnduba)</i>	-
Existential present	yè mè	yèto <i>mèto</i>	dù <i>mìndu</i>	ònge <i>mèonge</i>
past	yèke yèba <i>mèke mèba</i>		dùba <i>mìnduba</i>	

The copulas are not inflected for person, number or politeness level, and only a subset distinguish tense. There are different forms for equation and existence structures. Equational copulas are used in constructions that equate two noun phrases. The existential forms are used in existential constructions, but also in locational, possessive and attributive constructions as well, which is common for Tibeto-Burman existential copulas (Genetti 2007: 190; Hari 2010; Garrett 2001). There are distinct forms for each of these functions for the personal and the dubitative. The general fact copula only appears in existential-type constructions and has no corresponding equational form. The sensory evidential is used on very rare occasion by speakers as an equational, although this appears to be at the periphery of acceptable use.

The copulas in the bolded box within Table 1 can also function as auxiliaries in certain constructions. This is a common use of copulas in Tibetic languages (Hari 2010: 60; Kelly 2004: 351). This subset of copula verbs can be used to add tense information as well as epistemic information about the evidential status of the utterance. The structures that include copulas as auxiliaries are perfective and imperfective, habitual and narrative past. In the examples presented below copulas that are used as auxiliaries are glossed AUX. I do not focus on the nature of the auxiliary constructions, but on the evidential contribution of the form to the utterance. It is also possible to construct an utterance without using an evidential, such as by using a simple past or non-past construction where auxiliaries are not used.

Semantically, there are four different categories of copula verbs in Lamjung Yolmo. The first is the personal, which encodes information that is personally known by the speaker. The sentence in (1) would be uttered in the context where a person knew their child was residing in the other village or travelled there every day to attend school.

inside none COP.PE.NEG empty-EMPH COP.SENS

‘there is nothing inside, it is empty’

(AL 110217-03 01:50)

That it draws attention to the act of perception, means it can contextually acquire a pragmatic inference of ‘newness’ of information that others have analysed as ‘mirativity’ in related languages (DeLancey 1986; but see Hill 2012). This is particularly the case for the *dùba* form of the sensory, which is often more emphatic in its use, thus giving a stronger implicature of newness.

The distribution of the personal and sensory is similar to what has been discussed in recent years as egophoricity (Floyd et al. 2018). I do not use this approach, as this system contains more than a two-way choice, and because the relationship between evidential forms and epistemic pragmatic effects are still being explored cross-linguistically.

The general fact form is for generally known facts about the world, such as chilli being spicy, or lapsi (a fruit) being sour (4). It is attested in Melamchi Valley Yolmo (Hari 2010: 52) but is not attested in other Tibetic languages. It is less frequently used in daily interaction.

4. *kálaŋ sè* *ŋàrmu mèðŋge*

lapsi sweet COP.GF

‘lapsi (fruit) are not sweet’

(RL 101125-01)

The reportative particle is used when the source is a specific prior utterance. In Lamjung Yolmo this is frequently a specific utterance by an individual, although the reported speaker is never overtly marked. The need for a specific prior utterance to use the reportative means that it is not used in folk narratives. In (5) the speaker reports information about the local bus while a group of people wait its arrival in a village.

5. *gàdi* *òŋ-ke* *ló*

bus come-NON.PST RS

‘the bus is coming (she said)’

detailed analysis of evidentiality and its interaction with questions and reported speech.

5 Eliciting evidentiality

In this section I discuss structured narrative and interactional contexts in which to elicit evidential usage for analysis. I have broadly categorised the tasks by the activities involved: image tasks (Section 5.1), object tasks (Section 5.2), and tasks that involve listening and speaking (Section 5.3). Some of these tasks I created myself as I worked through my evolving analysis of the evidential system of Lamjung Yolmo, others are existing games or tasks that were created for linguistic research, which I used or modified to help me in my data collection. For each tool or task, I give an overview of the methodology and my motivation for including it in my fieldwork process. I do not provide a comprehensive analysis of the evidential variation that each task prompted but instead focus on key findings or examples that the task provided. I also discuss any limitations with the task, or my execution of it. It should also be noted that these tasks will also generate a lot of data for other grammatical constructions and interactional variation in language use.

5.1 Image tasks

Below I discuss three image tasks that I was involved in creating and used in my work. I have also had successfully elicited useful evidential data using pre-existing video stimulus kits from the Put Project (Bowerman et al. 2004) and the Reciprocal Project (Evans et al. 2004), both developed at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen. Both sets contain short videos of people acting out situations. The data from these videos was helpful in teasing out the interaction of evidentiality and aspect in Lamjung Yolmo (Gawne 2013: 262). One limitation of these videos is that their artificiality made it hard for speakers to take them on face-value.

5.1.1 Family Problem Picture Task

The Family Problem Picture Task is a storyboard activity based around 16 images. With these images it is possible to form a single narrative. The canonical narrative tells the story of a family attempting to overcome a drama but the images are open-ended enough to allow participants to change the storyline around, or create a whole new narrative. People work in pairs to describe the images, then create and tell a narrative. This task was developed as a way of eliciting socially interactive data and lent itself to cross-linguistic comparison as part of a larger research project investigating Language and Social Cognition,¹ of which my PhD

¹ 'Language and Social Cognition: The Design Resources of Grammatical Diversity' Australian Research Council Discovery Project 0878126. Chief Investigators Nicholas Evans and Alan Rumsey

was a part. A detailed explanation of the methodology is presented in San Roque et al. (2012). The task has subsequently been used in the analysis of modality in Yurakaré (Gipper, this volume), Kogi (Knuchel, this volume), Ghanaian Pidgin English (Nordén 2016) and Xining Mandarin (Bell 2017) as well as other linguistic phenomena including information structure in Malay (Kratochvíl, Ismail and Hamzah 2018) and cross-linguistic comparison of Australian English and Auslan (Australian Sign Language) (Hodge et al. 2019).

There are three main parts to the task, which elicit different kinds of evidential data. First, the participants are given each card individually, out of canonical narrative order, and asked to describe what they see. This elicits descriptive information with some conversation. Next, they must work together to establish a cohesive narrative, which can generate a great deal of naturalistic conversation and negotiation. Finally, one speaker is asked to tell the story. If they present the story in third person, they are asked to repeat it in first person, assuming the role of one of the main characters. This provides narrative, but also provides specific point-of-view information.

I ran this task twice with Lamjung Yolmo speakers (LG1-091108-01, LG1-101124-04). Everyone participating in the research project collected recordings of the Family Problem Picture Task to build a comparative data set of features for analysis.² I found it particularly useful as the data provides a relatively good idea of the type of knowledge participants have of events as they are being handed the cards and can compare the evidential forms used by the participants at the different stages of the task.

Below I give one example of how the speaker's knowledge, and the evidentials used, shifted across the task. In (7) SBL is describing the events of image five, where a man and a woman are sitting in court after he has hit her. The actual hitting event is presented in a subsequent card, but the man is restrained and the woman is heavily bandaged. The sequences of utterances in (7) are from the first time SBL is describing the cards.

7. SBL: *pèemi gòo róp-sin dù*
 wife head break-PST COP.SENS
 ‘(the) wife’s head was broken

(ANU), Andrea Schalley (Griffith), Barbara Kelly (University of Melbourne).

² This has now become the Social Cognition Parallax Interview Corpus (SCOPIC) (Barth & Evans

khyóga=ki kyàp dùba
 husband=ERG hit COP.SENS.EMPH
 ‘(the) husband hit (her)’

khyóga=ki kyàp yèto
 husband=ERG hit COP.DUB
 ‘(the) husband probably hit (her).’
 (SBL LG1-101124-04 03:10-03:14)

Here he uses a sensory evidential to describe the woman’s state and make the claim that the husband hit her. Although this statement is based on inference, SBL uses the emphatic sensory evidential. He realizes that he does not actually have any perceptual evidence of the event itself, only the residual evidence of the wound and so downgrades the epistemic assertion of his statement in the next utterance. This gives us data that demonstrates Lamjung Yolmo sensory evidentials are not preferred with resultant states.

When SBL has put the whole narrative together and is telling it, he is able to use the sensory evidential when discussing the court scene, as he has seen the hitting event and described it earlier in the narrative (8):

8. SBL: *khó=ki kyàp-sin dù*
 3SG.M=ERG hit-PST COP.SENS
 ‘he hit (his wife).’
 (SBL LG1-101124-04 17:58)

Finally, when he is reporting these events from the perspective of the husband in the final telling, there is no evidence marking used in (9). The lack of evidential conforms to the general tendency for there to be limited evidential marking in first person narratives in Lamjung Yolmo (Gawne 2013: 258).

9. SBL: *òolegi kyàp tér-sin*
 and.then hit give-PST
 ‘and then (I) hit (her).’
 (SBL LG1-101124-04 28:23)

The Family Problem Picture Task also allows us to see speakers negotiate with each other as they make sense of the information in the images (10). In the conversational sequence below the two participants are discussing the women in image one, who is standing with something in her arms. AL starts by asserting that it is corn using the *yimba* personal form. When SL suggests it looks like a banana using the sensory *dù*, AL reduces the epistemic certainty of her original suggestion by using a dubitative *yindo*. Finally, SL agrees that it is corn, again using the sensory, and the description continues with having reached a consensus that the image depicts corn.

10. AL: *dì teí yimba*
 this what COP.PERS
 ‘what is this?’

màgi yimba
 corn COP.PERS
 ‘it is corn.’

- SL: *mòdze tile dù*
 banana like COP.SENS
 ‘it is like bananas.’

- AL: *màgi yindo*
 corn COP.PERS
 ‘it may be corn.’

- SL: *màgi thó pè dù*

corn cradle do COP.SENS

‘(she) is cradling corn.’

(AL and SL LG1-091108-01 01:14-01:18)

Alongside the benefit of being able to collect rich interactional data in a context where reference tracking is made easier by the constraints of the task, there are some limitations to using this tool. Only the most well-resourced researcher is likely to be able to run the task more than once or twice, as it is not a trivial task to transcribe these 30-40-minute conversational recordings. The topic of drinking and domestic violence may sit uncomfortably with some researchers, or in some communities, particularly when the task is instigated by an outsider linguist. The nature of the topic means that participants may disclose information that is subsequently not appropriate for sharing, or the corpus may be filled with a multitude of examples like (7)–(9) which may be an accurate representation of the distribution of evidentiality, but you may rightly feel is not a great representation of the community with whom you work. I no longer use the Family Problem Picture Task activity in my research for these reasons.

5.1.2 Jackal and Crow Picture Task

A storyboard activity that is more appropriate for a diverse range of age groups is the jackal and crow story. This task involves the fable-style story of the two animal characters across nine images. The crow takes a fish and flies to a tree when a jackal passes by, sees the crow and decides he wants the fish. The jackal devises a plot where he gets the crow to sing by complimenting him on his voice, thus making the crow drop the fish. In the final images, the jackal is happy with his meal while the crow is sad in his tree. This is an existing fable in Nepal, and similar tales have been recorded in Botswana (Knappert 1985) and Europe (La Fontaine and Tastu 1842; Perry 2007)

It is a useful story because it involves two perspectives – the jackal’s and the crow’s. It also includes a depiction of internal cognitive states, such as the jackal wanting the fish and the crow feeling sad. While it is less open-ended than the Family Problem Picture Task, it has the benefit of being shorter, allowing the researcher to collect more recordings. The themes of the narrative are also appropriate for a wider age range, thus allowing for data from children to be collected. The task, including the materials and procedure, is discussed further in Kelly and Gawne (2011).

Because the narrative involves the internal states of the animals, I found this task

useful in providing endopathic constructions, which can be hard to elicit. In (11) the jackal is provoking the crow to sing, so that he will drop the fish. The jackal uses a sensory evidential with a second person subject and verb of cognition. Verbs relating to internal states have different constraints on evidentiality to those of external actions, with observations using perceptual evidence of other people’s internal states usually restricted and considered ungrammatical or infelicitous by speakers. The jackal, however, uses this construction:

11. *lùndi láp-sin yimba ná kí*
 jackal say-PST COP.PERS PART or
- khé=ki lú nèn mè-ééé dùba*
 2SG=ERG song sing NEG.NON.PST-know COP.SENS.EMPH
- ‘(the) jackal said, “perhaps you [...] don’t know how to sing a song!”’
- (RL LG1-101027-01 04:48)

The construction is possible here because the jackal has been demanding repeatedly that the crow sing. By making a claim about the crow’s knowledge and ability with the sensory evidential, the jackal is making a very strong assertion. Attempting to create this context in elicitation would be extremely difficult, but it is possible to track this use in the narrative and thus observe an unlikely, but plausible, pragmatic function of evidentiality in relation to endopathic verbs.

5.1.3 Optical illusions

For this task participants were presented with five different printed optical illusions. These were used to generate talk that involved observation and potential uncertainty. The participants were not told that these were illusions and were simply asked to discuss the images. Because the copular paradigm in Lamjung Yolmo has a set of distinctions that involve both epistemic certainty and evidentiality, I created this task to elicit content that shifted between evidence and certainty.

The five optical illusions were chosen to be maximally interesting for the participants. The first is an oil painting by Ukrainian artist Oleg Shuplyak, which shows a bird on a branch next to a cluster of leaves that look like a bird. The second is an image of a swan painted onto a hand by Italian artist Guido Daniele. The hand is hard to perceive and the swan is very

detailed. The third is another painting by Oleg Shuplyak, this time a combination of a self-portrait and a landscape with the figure of a painter in the foreground. In this image the landscape elements and the face are equally prominent, which is a common feature of Shuplyak's style. The fourth image is of a crocodile painted onto a hand by Guido Daniele. Although the image is also very lifelike, the style of image is exactly the same as the swan image above, so by this image speakers have been primed to know that they are looking at a hand. The fifth and final image is of a classic optical illusion where the black and white image of a duck rotated 90 degrees becomes an image of a rabbit. This one was kept until last, as it is more abstract and less photo-realistic than the others. Copyright permissions prevent me from including these images in this article.

The utterances in (12) are a selection from AL's description of the hand painted like a swan. AL describes the illusion of the swan, and then we see her certainty weaken after she is told it's not a swan, and then certainty returns after she is told that it is a hand.

12. AL: *dì hǎǎs yìmba*
 this duck(Nep) COP.PERS
 'this is a duck.'

LG: *hǎǎs mìn*
 duck(Nep) COP.PERS.NEG
 'it's not a duck.'

AL: *dì takkamu hǎǎs límú-rāŋ dù*
 this same duck like-EMPH COP.SENS
 'it looks like a duck (maybe).'

AL: *hǎǎs-rāŋ yìŋdō*
 duck(Nep)-EMPH COP.DUB
 'it is a duck (maybe).'

LG: *dì yìmba*

this COP.PERS

‘it’s this’ (mimics shape of swan with hand)

AL: *óo di làkpa yimba*

EXCL this hand COP.PERS

‘ah, this is a hand.’

AL: *mì dù ná léé dī-ni*

person COP.SENS PART PART this-FOC

‘oh, this is a person.’

(AL and LG LG1-120209-01 02:29-03:14)

As AL’s knowledge about the illusion shifts so do her choice of evidential forms in (13). When shown the illusion of the crocodile a few minutes later, AL no longer shows any uncertainty about what the object is, knowing that it only resembles a reptile, but like the swan earlier it is a human hand:

13. AL: *dī sarpa límu dù*

this snake(Nep) like COP.SENS

‘this is like a snake.’

AL: *làkpa yimba*

hand COP.PERS

‘it’s a hand.’

(AL LG1-120209-01 06:00-06:04)

The sequence in which these images were presented clearly had an influence on the way speakers responded to them. As we saw in the example above, people became more aware across the images that they should be able to find something unusual. In (13) AL comments on the initial visual response she has, using a sensory evidential, before using her existing knowledge and marking that she knows it’s a hand using the personal evidential. Changing

the order could alter the responses, as could presenting the images over a series of weeks, rather than all in the same session.

5.2 Object tasks

5.2.1 Magic

Magic tricks involve a change of state which is often unexpected for the viewer and distorts expectations of what can be seen. For these reasons magic tricks can be useful for eliciting potentially novel evidential uses and to test any hypotheses about mirativity and newness of information.

I have used three different magic tricks during fieldwork. The first is a basic ‘conceal/reveal’ trick using a magician’s change box or change bag. These allow the magician to place a small object inside and have it disappear or reappear at will. The trick can also be performed where the audience is shown the empty box or bag from which an item is ‘magically’ made to appear. The second magic trick involves a ‘magic colouring book’. The book is designed so that the first time it is shown to the audience the pages are blank. The performer can then make black and white images appear in the book and, finally, ‘colour’ the images. The third trick is a silk scarf, which changes from yellow and green to blue and red.

The researcher performed the role of magician for all speakers, working off a script developed with a regular consultant. Ideally a local participant would be trained as the magician, removing the researcher from the interaction, but this was not feasible during this project.³ At the completion of the task, participants were shown how the trick was performed, as I felt that the responsibility as a researcher to ensure that the participants understood the tricks outweighed the duty of a responsible magician who never reveals her secrets.

For most performances of the magic tricks, the reactions were not those that would be expected when performed for a Western audience. This is not particularly surprising, given that such magic tricks are a socially constructed performance, as is the way a Western audience is taught to react to them. Having said that, they did provide a useful opportunity to explore the way people use different evidential forms in different contexts. In (14) KL discusses the location of the money at three points: (a) when it has been placed in the bag; (b) when it ‘disappears’; and (c) when it reappears. When describing it initially, events are sufficiently unremarkable that she does not include any evidential form at all, and if she did it

³ This is partly because the best candidate magician left the village to attend college during one fieldtrip. It is also because when the magic tricks were demonstrated on an earlier trip, the participant was so excited about it that he had shown everyone the trick before I had a chance to get my audio recorder. This is an unfortunate example of an elicitation task that was too favourably taken up by participants.

would likely be a personal form. However, for (b) and (c) she uses the sensory evidential.

14. a) *táŋa-di kàldzuŋ=la*
money-FOC bag=LOC
'the money (is) in the bag.'
(KL LG1-120304-02 10:57)

b) *táŋa mĩndu lée*
money COP.SENS.NEG PART
'the money is not.'
(KL LG1-120304-02 11:22)

c) *táŋa òo=la dù*
money there=LOC COP.SENS
'the money is there.'
(KL LG1-120304-02 11:22)

The personal and sensory evidentials can sometimes be used interchangeably in the same context in Lamjung Yolmo, but performing experiments like magic tricks give data that indicate that sensory evidentials are preferred for situations where the information is recent and worth being indexed as perceived for the interaction.

5.2.2 Hidden objects

The 'hidden objects' task was created and described by Vokurková (2008:13–14), who used it on her work on Lhasa Tibetan evidential and epistemic forms. This task involves taking a number of everyday objects and covering them with a cloth, varying the level of access the participant has in order to generate controlled data on evidential and epistemic use by different speakers. The participant is first invited to guess what the objects are, based purely on their shape. Unsurprisingly, people find this stage quite difficult and are often unwilling to give an answer. Next they are invited to feel the objects through the cloth, guessing what they are, and then feeling the items under the cloth without looking. I found that speakers were unwilling to engage in the step of feeling under the cloth, as they had usually guessed what

the objects were. Finally, the cloth is removed and speakers are asked to say what the objects are while looking at them. This task makes it possible to track which evidential or epistemic strategies people use, as their knowledge about what the objects are improves over the duration of the activity (Gawne 2013: 216). Participants were prompted using the same script to allow for consistent data collection.

Vokurková used quite large objects (for example: a motorbike helmet, a teapot, a pile of apples). I ran this experiment with smaller objects (a small book, an onion, reading glasses) to allow for the activity to be more portable and easily replicated across field sites. Video recording this task is highly recommended so it is clear for future analysis which stage of the task participants are performing.

The examples below are typical of the kind of evidential shifts in this task. We track AL's discovery of the onion, through from making a guess involving approximation to another object (15), initial tactile information that makes it clear what the item is (16), to confirming shortly thereafter that she already knows what it is (17).

15. *ɲà =ki* *ɲò* *mà-ɛée*
 1SG=ERG recognise NEG.PST-know

tséemi tsá *sè* *límu* *dù*
 small play thing like COP.SENS

‘I don’t recognise it, it’s like a small toy.’

(AL LG1-120212-01 00:59)

16. *dì-ni* *pyaz-ka* *dùba*
 this-FOC onion(Nep)-FOC COP.SENS.EMPH

‘it is an onion.’

(AL LG1-120209-01 03:05)

17. *dì* *pyaz* *yimba*
 this onion(Nep) COP.PERS

‘it is an onion.’

Similar to the optical illusion task (Section 5.1.3) the speaker uses the sensory evidential for immediate sensory experience, before moving to the personal evidential when they have confirmed the item. Different participants may use different evidentials at different stages, depending on their ability to guess, but this task makes it easy to track and compare across speakers and stages. Participants generally found this task engaging and entertaining, and children continued to play it as a game when recording sessions were completed.

5.3 Listening and talking tasks

For other listening and talking tasks described in this volume see Kunchel (this volume), which discusses the elicitation of epistemic distinctions in Kogi using two existing listening and talking tasks. The first is The Difference Task (Enfield and de Ruiter 2003), in which participants detect the differences in two photographs that show only small differences using verbal negotiation. The second is the Shape Classifier Task (Seifart 2003), a matcher-director task where one participant is directed to arrange a group of small objects to match an image the director has. These are similar to the twenty questions game discussed below where there is an initial asymmetry of knowledge, which is corrected over the interaction.

5.3.1 Twenty questions

This activity is based on a game popular with Western children where one person thinks of an object and the other players must figure out what that object is by asking yes/no type questions about features of the object. I set up this activity to track the use of evidentials in question and answer sequences. The most common question structure in Lamjung Yolmo, as well as other Tibetic languages, is where the speaker uses the evidential form that they expect will be used by the person the question is addressed to. This is known as the ‘anticipation rule’ (Gawne 2016b; Tournadre 2017: 113–114).

To make it familiar for participants, photos of everyday items around the village were used, including a broom, an ox and a shoe. These images are archived with the collection.⁴ One single recording with two women who played through seven rounds resulted in almost two hundred question and answer pairs. This activity not only results in a large number of a single type of question, but also for the tracking of information as the person guessing becomes more and more knowledgeable about the target.

In (18) we see the mismatch in participant knowledge state at the end of one round.

⁴ <http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/LG1/items/Twentyquestions>

This was a round where AL has a picture of an ox and SL is guessing what it may be. This has been a protracted round, largely due to being side-tracked about the edibility status of the object in question. SL has finally figured out that it was an ox, looked at the image and exclaims, AL confirms by using the personal form. SL looks at the image and concurs with AL, but instead of using the personal form uses the sensory evidential:

18. SL: *láy láy*
 ox ox
 ‘ox ox!’

AL: *láy yimba*
 ox COP.PERS
 ‘it is an ox.’

ST: *láy dù*
 ox COP.SENS
 ‘it is an ox.’

(SL and AL LG1-120214-02 11:29-11:37)

Both women only have the photograph as their referent, and yet both use different copula forms in describing the image. This is because the women bring different knowledge states to their viewing of the image. AL, who has been looking at the image for some time, and has taken the role of the person with knowledge, uses the personal evidential form. SL is looking at the image for the first time, and her use of the sensory evidential indicates that the visual confirmation is more important for her to comment on what the image is, which gives the additional indication that what is in the photo is new information.

5.3.2 Reported speech on the phone

Lamjung Yolmo has an evidential particle that is used for reported information (*ló*). This information is usually from a specific speech event, with deixis altered from the original utterance to the reported utterance. To gain an understanding of how events were reported from their origins, I took a set of utterances from elicitation sessions and put them on a recording device with headphones and asked a participant to listen to the recordings and

answer the question *tɛ́í ló?* ‘what was said?’ (lit. ‘what reported particle’). This is the kind of question that someone might be asked about a phone call that the other person cannot hear, and that was the artificial narrative I constructed for participants. The recorded sentences used, and their citation to the original recordings, are archived with the collection.

Ideally this experiment would be conducted with a native speaker asking the questions, but even a setup with a non-native speaking researcher yielded a good set of examples that showed the syntactic variation possible between the original event and the reporting of that event. For example, (19) is the original recording from an earlier elicitation session and (20) is RL’s report of this event.

19. *ɲà* *sà* *tè-ti* *yè*
 1SG eat AUX-PFTV COP.PERS
 ‘I am eating’
 (AL LG1-100930-01)

20. *mò* *sà* *tè-ti* *yè* *ló*
 3SG.F eat AUX-PFTV COP.PERS RS
 ‘she is eating (she said).’
 (RL LG1-120218-01)

This example, and the many others, demonstrate that the RS particle is not a verb as it does not conjugate for tense, aspect or mood, nor take a subject. The verb within the reported speech takes the regular TAM morphology, and the particle occurs separately. It also shows that pronoun deixis changes relative to the person reporting the event, but the RS particle is additional to the reported clause, including any existing copulas with an evidential value, which means that the evidential value of the original utterance remains.

5.3.3 Multiple reports

This task was inspired by de Villiers et al. (2009), which used a picture task where characters responded to stimuli and the participant had to decide if the participant had used an appropriate evidential in relation to the stimuli. This judgement task is much more stripped down and was much more efficient to deploy and analyse.

The typological literature on evidentiality suggests there is a hierarchy of evidential preferences. For example, an utterance marked with direct visual evidence may be considered more trustworthy information than hearsay or inference (Oswalt 1986: 43; Garrett 2001; Aikhenvald 2004: 307; see also Brugman and Macaulay 2015: 212–215). In an attempt to elicit this kind of preferencing, I set up a reliability judgement task. The other tasks discussed above are designed to create situations eliciting speech, so this activity was designed to access intuitions without necessarily asking people to create the utterances themselves. The full set of contexts and distribution of the evidential values are archived as a document with the corpus.

In ten fictional situations, the participant was given two conflicting reports and has to decide who they believe. In each situation there is some information given to set up the event, and then two people give conflicting reports that also had conflicting evidential or modal information on the copula verb. With this conflicting information the speaker then has to make a choice about the situation. Below is an example, translated into English.

Your sister has a new skirt, you have not seen the skirt.

One person says, ‘The skirt is red (using an emphatic sensory evidence)’

Another person says, ‘The skirt is green (using a personal evidence)’

What colour do you think the skirt is?

The participant then gives their answer. The story information was given in Nepali, and the reported speech events were in Lamjung Yolmo. There were two sets of the activity and the copulas were inverted between the two sets – so while set A had the order above, the same event had ‘the skirt is red (personal evidential)’ in set B. This was done to minimise any influence of the content of the utterance and the order of the evidentials. This task was only run half a dozen times, so there were not enough answers to give quantifiable analysis of the answers given, but the task did give some insight into how speakers process evidential information.

For the example above, all participants chose the colour option marked with the sensory emphatic form regardless of which colour it is, because a person does not necessarily wear the same colour clothes every day and therefore this is something that requires sensory evidence to confirm. There was one other scenario where people gave consistent responses.

In this setup, participants were asked which report they believed about the type of food stored in a vessel. The two reports varied in the type of common food stuff stored (rice or corn) and in the use of either an emphatic sensory evidential (*dùba*) or an utterance with a personal evidential with a reported particle (*yè ló*). All but one person preferred the emphatic sensory evidential. Therefore, in these situations where someone is describing a specific event, the sensory perceptual evidential is considered by speakers to mark more direct knowledge than the personal copula or the reported particle.

Not all events described resulted in such consistent answers. VL had, like other participants, said that the emphatic sensory was preferred in the two contexts above. In another situation where two people are describing the colour of a new goat someone in the village has purchased, one person used the sensory evidential *dù*, while the other used the personal *yè*. In this scenario VL appeared to have different intuitions from those about scenario one, in that she did not want to presume that one report was more likely to be correct than the other, instead stating that both participants saw the colour of the goat. This indicates that the ‘personal means no visual perception’ description given by some participants is not as strong as Lamjung Yolmo speakers’ introspection indicates.

6 Conclusion

Every language, and every interactional context in that language, will provide its own challenges and insights when it comes to epistemic and evidential use. Elicitation and the analysis of spontaneous discourse both have important roles in the analysis of evidentiality, see in particular Mithun (this volume) on the importance of collecting spontaneous speech across a wide range of genres and social contexts. Even with the most extensive and well-analysed corpus of naturalistic speech, tools that constrain the interactional context while allowing for naturalistic interaction allow us to track evidential and epistemic knowledge states across specific interactions. I have shared my experience with using a number of these methods, some drawn from the existing literature and some of my own design. They did not always work exactly as intended, but all gave some insight into the way people use evidentiality in Lamjung Yolmo.

An approach to evidentiality that centres the importance of interactional context on evidential use will help ensure that descriptions of evidential systems are not reductive, but capture the nuance of evidential choice that is available to speakers. By using elicitation tools that constrain the particular context, there is also an opportunity to ensure that future comparative work on evidentiality has a more transparent basis for comparison. For this to

happen, researchers need to not only use a common set of tools, but describe their methodology and make the resultant data corpus available to other researchers.

Different tools will suit different research contexts, depending on the way people respond to them, and the grammatical or interactional distinctions the researcher is attempting to isolate and examine. The best way forward to ensure the greatest benefit is for researchers to make clear in their work the methods that they used in their collection of data and analysis, and to make available, where possible, the research tools and underlying data.

Abbreviations

1 first person

2 second person

3 third person

COP copula

DUB dubitative

EMPH emphatic

ERG ergative

F female

FOC focus

GEN genitive

LOC locative

M male

NEG negative

NON.PST non-past

PART particle

PERS personal evidential

PFTV perfective

PST past

RS reported speech

SENS sensory

SG single

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