

# ONE =*Mi*: AN EVIDENTIAL, EPISTEMIC MODAL, AND FOCUS MARKER IN IMBABURA QUECHUA

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**1. Introduction** The Quechuan language family has received much attention to for their paradigmatically well-attested evidential (EV, henceforth) / epistemic modal system (EM, henceforth) (Faller 2003, Weber 1986, Nuckolls 1993, and Floyd 1999). The main focus of this paper is on the multiple functions of particle =*mi* in Imbabura Quechua (IQ, henceforth), of which multiple functions are marking EV, EM and focus elements:

- (1) *Juan*=***mi***            *punyu-rka*  
       *Juan*=***mi***            sleep-Perf  
       “Juan slept.”
- (2)a. *Juan*=***mi***            *Berkeley-man*    *ri-gri-n*  
       *Juan*=***mi***            Berkeley-to    go-Fut-3ps  
       “Juan will go to Berkeley.”    [prompted in Faller 2003]
- b. *Juan*=***mi***            *izhakizha*    *ka-ni*  
       *Juan*=***mi***            sad            be.  
       “Juan is sad.”                    [prompted in Faller 2003]
- (3) A:        *pita wenyuchi-rka pirkuti-ta?*                    A: Who killed the rat?  
               who kill-Past                    rat-Acc
- B:        *Pepe=mi wenyuchi-rka pirkuti-ta*                    B: Pepe killed the rat.  
               Pepe=***mi*** kill-Past                    rat-Acc

In (1), the usage of =*mi* indicates that the origo has observed the focal event of Juan’s sleeping by default and thus, it conveys an EV function. Since (2a) includes a future event, which is an irrealis event, =*mi* in this case does not function same as (1): it indicates that the speaker’s commitment towards validity of the information, which is an EM sense. In (2b), =*mi* also functions more as an EM than as an EV, since the origo cannot have direct access to the internal state of the subject. In (3), finally, =*mi* marks a focus element in the utterance: as an answer for the question, the focused element, here Pepe, is marked with =*mi*.

The aim of this paper<sup>1</sup> is to explore a possibility that the three mentioned functions are not conceptually unrelated to one another with regard to the seemingly synchronic homonymy. This paper would like to ponder on two major issues: The first issue is about whether EVs and EMs can be separated or not. This paper suggests that in order to better understand =*mi* that is licensed either in EV and EM context in IQ, we need to consider the conceptual causal event structure that embeds EVs and EMs at the same time. The second major issue is about a possibility that =*mi*, an EV or an EM, whichever it might be defined, can be functionally extended to be used as a focus marker (FM).

This paper argues that =*mi* cannot be classified as a pure EV or as a pure EM, but conveys both notions and further that in order to better grasp whichever more salient function case by case, we need to consider a causal event structure embedding both of the functional categories as a whole that involves a series of sub-event structures which are linked by the origo’s inferences. In addition, this study explores the possibility that EV/EM function is conceptually related to function of encoding focus and in fact, to argue that they share cognitive motivation in common. In a case of EV/EM function, the target event is cognitively salient and is given attention, whereas the mode of access or the origo’s belief is presupposed and backgrounded. In parallel, in a case of FM function, the focused element is cognitively

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<sup>1</sup> The dataset that this paper employs has been elicited and obtained in Field Method class of University of California, Berkeley (Ling 240; Lev Michael; two consultants (Augusto, Mariana)), from Fall 2009 to Spring 2010.

salient, whereas the other element in the construction is given relatively less attention.

## 2. Functional Properties of =*Mi*

**2.1 Direct Evidentials** The observation made in IQ from my consultant MC is that =*mi* can be used as a marker which encodes direct EV. The direct EV function can be tested with an utterance that negates the speaker's visual access in the previous utterance such as "I didn't see it." It turns out that the cancellation of the implicature results in a logical contradiction, which yields ungrammaticality:

- (5)?? *Ines-ka kayna paypa nyanya-ta=**mi** tupa-ri-rka*  
 Ines-Top yesterday 3sg.gen sister-Acc=**mi** meet-Ref-Perf  
*nyuka na riku-rka-ni-chu*  
 1sg Neg see-Perf-1sg-NPI

'Ines visited her sister yesterday. I didn't see it.'

It indicates that =*mi* definitely has a direct EV functional property, which enables an utterance with it to encode the speaker's perception of the focal information via direct mode of access.

**2.2 Epistemic Modals** With all the cases indicating its direct EV marking function, the marker is licensed in non-prototypical EV contexts. First, =*mi* is freely licensed in the contexts where the speaker talks about events that occurred before her birth, if she is sure that the event happened:

- (6) A: *maypita wacha-ri-rka kampa mama?*  
 Where be.born-Ref-Perf your mother  
 "Where was your mother born?"  
 B: *nyuka mama=**mi** wacha-ri-rka Seoul-pi.*  
 my mother=**mi** born-Ref-Perf Seoul-Loc  
 "My mother was born in Seoul."

Although the information was told by his grandfather, according to AO, if the speaker is sure about the event, then =*mi* is licensed.<sup>2</sup>

Next, its strong EM characteristic can be tested by seeing whether it is compatible with weak EM adverbial *nyarazha* 'maybe,' which is shown as follows:

- (7) *nyarazha tamya-gri-n(\*=**mi**)*  
 maybe rain-Fut-3sg(\*=**mi**)  
 (8) *nyarazha tamya-xu-n(\*=**mi**)*  
 maybe rain-Imperf-3sg(\*=**mi**)

As shown in (7) and (8), where strong EM sense and/or direct EV sense conveyed by the marker conflicts with the weak EM word *nyarazha*, the marker clearly conveys properties of EM.

## 2.3. The Function of Focus Marking

- **Argument Focus** The information that is already spoken in the question becomes a topic in B's response and speaker B's answer for the question will be in focus. Let us take a look at examples below:

- (9) *pita wenyuchi-rka pirkuti-ta?* A: Who killed the rat?  
 who kill-Past rat-Acc  
*Pepe=**mi** wenyuchi-rka pirkuti-ta* B: Pepe killed the rat.  
 Pepe=**mi** kill-Past rat-Acc

<sup>2</sup> If =*shi* (indirect EV) is employed in this utterance, according to AO, it will be likely to be a doubtful confirming question something like 'I heard that my mother was born in Seoul, is it right?' So to speak, indirect EV=*shi* is not licensed, unless the focal information is shared within common ground.

(9')??*pirkuti-ta=mi wenyuchi-rka Pepe*  
 rat-Acc=**mi** kill-Past Pepe

Since [x killed the rat] is already set up in speaker A's question, the answer in focus will be naturally Pepe and accordingly, =*mi* is attached to Pepe. Under the same context, however, =*mi* cannot be attached to 'the rat.'

- **Sentential/Predicate Focus** In (10), there are two topic elements and finally, predicate *apa* 'take' is in focus.

(10) *kunan-ga kamba, kamba ya-shka-ta-ka*  
 now-Top 2sg think-Perf-Advz-Top  
*apa-sha=mi ni-shka nin*  
 take-Fut=**mi** say-Perf Quot

"Now your things, your thoughts, I will take,' he said."

(line 30; The money cliff 2009-09sep-29-MXC-MDW\_WHC-1, <http://methods0910.wordpress.com/2009/11/18/more-on-ka-and-mi/>, respectively).

- **Contrastive Topic** Since there are only two candidates for the argument in question in (11), if one is negated, then the other is naturally assigned contrastive topic. In this case, *xuan* is it and it is marked with =*mi*.

(11) *pita miku-rka atalpa-ta xuan o laura*  
 who eat-Past chicken-Acc John or Laura  
 'Who ate the chicken, John or Laura?'  
*Laura na miku-rka-chu xuan=mi miku-rka*  
 Laura Neg eat-Past-Neg John=**mi** eat-Past  
 'Laura didn't eat, but John ate.'

### 3. Discussion

**3.1 Evidentiality and Epistemic Modality** The test to see whether pragmatic implicature for an EV sense is defeasible or not shown above is challenged by the following example that was obtained from the same consultant, which shows seemingly inconsistency (AO, cf. (5)):

(12) *Juan=mi kalpa-rka nyuka na riku-rka-ni-chu*  
 Juan=**mi** run-Perf I Neg see-Perf-1sg-NPI  
 'Juan ran. I didn't see it.'

Considering that an EV reading conveyed by =*mi* is sometimes defeasible and is sometimes not in the test and that its potential function could be either as an EV or an EM, we can see that the functional category =*mi* is not clearly defined either as an EV or an EM. This observation conforms to Faller's (2003) definition of =*mi* as the best possible evidence marker. The best possible evidence is not always direct visual evidence and this lies in the same vein in that the condition licenses flexible EM and/or EV functions of the marker.

**EV and EM as a Conceptual Package** Every EM construction always involves EV property implicitly or explicitly in the given context and EVs in general accompany more or less implicature of EM in the given context. Without any evidence, the speaker could have not had certainty that induces the speaker to draw a certain conclusion. If it is inevitably true that either of the functional categories involves semantically or pragmatically some portion of the other more or less, it would be more meaningful to look into how either of the categories is *construed* in the context that embeds both of the categories. In fact, EV or EM indicates relatively different conceptual portion of a causal event structure. The causal event structure consists of an event where the origo perceives relevant evidence, an event where the origo assesses the situation based on the evidence, and an event where the origo encodes the perception of evidence and/or the assessment, all of which are bridged by means of the

speaker's inference. Either of the notions cannot be defined properly independently of the other and further, this paper suggests that what is counted as EV or EM or EV/EM is determined by how a language profiles which portion of the causal event chain is profiled and semantically encoded into linguistic expressions. In IQ, both EV and EM functions are marked with =*mi* and there is flexible functional overlap between the two functions.

**3.2. Functional Similarity between EV/EM and FM** It is possible that a single linguistic item is employed in functioning as both of the categories, since they share in common a cognitive motivation that foregrounds the portion that the origo believes is not assimilated to the addressee's knowledge in common ground yet. Thus, new information in information structure and focal information conveyed by the evidentiality constructions are both conceptually salient in the context and set aside portions that are already shared and assimilated among communicative participants, which can be framed in the following table:

Table 1. Conceptual Structure in Parallel in EM/EV and FM

Information structure [sentence-internal]	EV constructions [event structure level]
Asserted	Focal info (the event that is observed)
Presupposed	Backgrounded info (the event of the origo's perception)

As shown above, the asserted part and the presupposed part in the sentence-internal level are focus and topic in information structure, whereas those in the event structure level, they are an event in question and the event of the speaker's perception of the aforementioned event. In this respect, focused element in information structure and a depicted event in EV construction are in parallel in their conceptual structures.

Faller (2002) also has shown that EVs convey information that is generally new to the addressee and that presupposition that the origo obtained the information is automatically accommodated (McCready 2005, Speas 2008, Kwon 2009). In this respect, the information that is marked by a FM and the one that is marked by an EV do not totally differ from each other. In EV constructions, as soon as the speaker makes an utterance with an EV marker, the addressee will seek the mentioned information that is not assimilated to the addressee's knowledge. Moreover, the addressee will automatically accommodate the presupposed fact that the speaker has obtained the information employing a particular mode of access to the focal information. For instance, in utterance *Pepe killed the rat*=*mi*, the focal information is the event in question - the event of Pepe's killing the rat, not the presupposed event of the speaker's obtaining the information. Comparing cognitive saliency or novelty of the focal event to that of recounting event, the focal event is cognitively foregrounded and thus, it is more likely to be marked by =*mi*.

If EVs in general embed new information, a question can be raised: Why does only the direct evidential appear in focus position? Actually, indirect EV =*shi* seems to occasionally appear in focus position (Weber 1989:419), which can be shown in (13):

- (13) Q:     *pita       wenyu-chi-rka   pirkuti-ta?*  
               who    kill-Caus-Perf   rat-Acc  
               "Who killed the rat?"
- A:     *Pepe=mi/shi   wenyu-chi-rka            pirkuti-ta*  
               *Pepe=mi/shi   kill-Caus-Perf           rat-Acc*  
               "Pepe killed the rat (I saw/I heard)."

Although the answer that contains =*shi* does not seem to be perfectly licensed, (13) was elicited from one of my consultants (AO). That is, if A obtains the information indirectly, =*shi* is licensed, which marks a focus in the utterance just like =*mi*. This suggests that EVs in general are likely to go naturally with novel information, since EVs are licensed mostly when

the speaker wants to disseminate her knowledge that has not been assimilated to the addressee's knowledge. Furthermore, the relatively higher frequency of =*mi* than =*shi* is not surprising, since the speaker naturally vouches for the validity of the information that she is about to make into an utterance in most cases of answering a question.

Another supporting evidence for the claim that EV/EM and FM functions are related is that only a single =*mi* is licensed in a simple clause (Cole 1982 and Muysken 1995).

(14)\* *nyuka mama=mi wacha-ri-rka=mi Seoul-pi.*  
 my mother=**mi** born-Ref-Perf=**mi** Seoul-Loc  
 "My mother was born in Seoul."

As shown in (14), only one =*mi* is licensed in a single clause. If EV/EM and FM categories had been marked different kinds of =*mi*, (14) should have been acceptable, meaning something like "My mother, not anybody else, was born in Seoul, I saw."

**5. Concluding Remarks** This paper analyzed the functional properties of an enclitic =*mi* in Imbabura Quechua, which is well-known as its multiple functions in Quechuan language family – EV, EM, and FM. Then, it was shown that there are more than a few examples where it is not easy to clearly define which conceptual role =*mi* plays in various contexts (imperatives, performatives, agentive action, irrealis event, immediate temporal/spatial constructions and so forth). Based on the observation, this paper explored a possibility that the three mentioned functions are not conceptually unrelated to one another.

This paper argued that =*mi* cannot be classified as a pure EV or as a pure EM, but conveys both notions, posing a third view on the debate on whether EVs and EMs can belong to a single functional category: In order to better understand =*mi* that is licensed either in EV and EM context in IQ, we need to consider the causal event structure as a whole where the experiential origo perceives a source of information and assesses the information. This paper further suggests that separability of the two categories is not a matter of importance, but to characterize either of the two in relation with the other is a key to better grasp the nature of the debate and further, characterizations of EVs and EMs.

The other major issue that the paper discussed was a possibility that =*mi*, an EV or an EM, whichever it might be defined, can be functionally extended to be used as a focus marker (FM). This paper argued that EV/EM function might possibly be conceptually related to function of encoding focus, because they share cognitive motivation in common in a sense that the origo's attention is given to cognitively more salient portion of given stimuli in both functions.

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