One =mi in Imbabura Quechua: An Evidential, Epistemic Modal, and Focus Marker

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INTRODUCTION: The Quechuan language family has been well-known for its paradigmatically well-attested evidential (EV, henceforth) / epistemic modal system (EM, henceforth) (Faller 1986, Nuckolls 1993, and Floyd 1999).

MAIN FOCUS: Multiple functions of particle =mi in Imbabura Quechua (IQ, henceforth) including EV, EM, and focus marking functions (FM, henceforth).

(1) Juan=mi punyu-rka [EV]
Juan=sleep-Perf "Juan slept."

(2a) Juan=mi Berkeley-man ri-gri-n [irealils, EM]
Juan=Berkeley-to go-Perf-3sg "Juan will go to B."

(2b) Juan=mi izhikuta ka-ni [internal state, EM]
Juan=sad be-3sg "Juan is sad."

(3) A: pita wenyuchi-rka pirkuti-ta? [FM]
who kill-Perf rat-Acc "Who killed the rat?"
B: Pepe=mi wenyuchi-rka pirkuti-ta
Pepe=kill-Perf rat-Acc B: Pepe killed the rat.

(4) Juan shamu-rka=mi
Juan come-Perf=mi "Juan came.

Ambiguous statement: EV: Juan came, I saw. EM: Juan came, I heard from him. FM: nobody but Juan came.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. Which grammatical category does particle =mi belong to?
This paper shows that =mi is the best possible evidence marker, which conforms to Faller’s (2003) claim. Furthermore, in order to better grasp whichever more salient function case by case, we need to consider the overall causal event structure embedding both of the functional categories.

2. Is there cognitive relation between the particle’s usage as a FM marker and as an EV/EM marker?
It is possible that they are conceptually related in that they foreground cognitively more salient or relatively more informative stimuli (figure) and background the commonly grounded or presupposed stimuli in the given context (ground).

PREVIOUS APPROACHES
The identity of the particle has been contested (EV encoded, EM implicated (Webber 1986); EM encoded, EV implicated (Nuckolls 1993); EV-validated [EV licensing condition] (Faller 2003); Radical category of EV (Floyd 1999) etc.)

DIRECT EVIDENTIALITY MARKING
(5) [The speaker tells someone that Iksoo is with her.]
Iksoo shamu-rka=mi
Iksoo come-Perf=mi ‘Iksoo came.

(6) Ines=ka kanya paypa nyanya-ta=mi tapa-ri-rka
Ines=Top yesterday 3sg gen sister-Acc=mi meet-Ref-Perf
nyuka na rika-rka-ni-cho
1sg Neg see-Perf-1sg-NPI
‘Ines visited her sister yesterday. I didn’t see it.’

EM is not defeasible

EPISTEMIC MODALITY MARKING
(7) [When Juan told the speaker that he ran, the speaker tells someone else that Juan ran.]
Juan kalpa-rka=mi
Juan run-Perf=mi ‘Juan ran, I’m sure’

(8) nyarazha tamya-ri-n=mi
maybe rain-Fut-3sg=mi

EM is not defeasible

FOCUS MARKING
- ARGUMENT FOCUS
(9) pita wenyuchi-rka pirkuti-ta? [FM]
who kill-Perf rat-Acc "Who killed the rat?"

B: Pepe=mi wenyuchi-rka pirkuti-ta
Pepe=kill-Perf rat-Acc B: Pepe killed the rat.

- SENTENTIAL/PREDICATE FOCUS
(10) kunan-ga kamba, kamba ya-shka-ta-ka
now-Top 2sg think-Perf-Advz-Top
apa=sh=mi ni-shka nin
take-Fut=mi say-Perf quot
"Now your things, your thoughts, I will take,” he said.

- MUTUALLY ACCOUNTABLE CONTINGENCY MARKING
(11) chaypi alku
A dog is over there.
there dog

(12) nuuka pungu-ta tanga-sha ‘I’ll push the door.’
doors-Acc push-Fut

(13) nuuka pungu-ta tanga-sha=mi ‘I’m about to push the door.
doors-Acc push-Fut=mi door (immediate future).

欺 =mi indicates that the focal information is within the range of the speaker’s perception and that of the speaker’s certainty (metaphorical extension of the spatial contingency to temporal/ causal contingency).

DISCUSSION 1
- A challenge: Inconsistency?
(13) Juan=mi kalpa-rka nyuka na rika-rka-ni-cho
Juan=mi run-Perf=mi ‘Juan ran. I didn’t see it.’

- EM over EV?
(14) [From a distance, the speaker saw someone who looks like Josh, suggesting that he was Josh]
nyuka=mi rika-rka Josh-ni-cho
I=mi see-Perf Josh-Acc ‘I saw Josh.’

- Faller (2003): The best possible evidence is not always direct visual evidence and ‘EV licensing condition’ flexibly licenses EM and/or EV functions of the marker upon contexts.

IMPLICATION: EV and EM as a Conceptual Package
They profile relatively different conceptual portions of a causal event structure
- Evidence Perception + Cognitive Process of inference = EV
- The Process of inference + a resulting cognitive assessment = EM

DISCUSSION 2
- It is possible that EV/EM and FM are conceptually in parallel:
  Information Structure [Sentence Internal Level]
  Focus (asserted) / Theme (presupposed)
  EV constructions [Event Structure Level]
  Focal Info (the observed event) / Backgrounded Info (the event of the origo’s perception)

EXIGENCE
- Only a single =mi is licensed in a simple clause (Cole 1982)
(16) *nuuka mama=mi wacha-ri-rka=mi Seoul-pi
my mother=mi born-Ref-Perf=mi Seoul-Loc
"My mother was born in Seoul.”

- Indirect EV =shi seems to occasionally appear in focus position (Webber 1989:419)

REFERENCES