

Research Article

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Explorations of Engagement: Introduction

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Abstract: The paper explores engagement as a linguistic category by discussing its defining characteristics. Following work by Evans and colleagues (2018a, b), we discuss issues of scope and the intersubjective distribution of information, as central to the definition of engagement. In addition, we examine the notion of access as a crucial component of engagement marking and we attempt to distinguish access from epistemic authority, which we argue is a prerequisite for the existence of engagement as a linguistic category. Both access and epistemic authority appear central to an analysis of engagement marking, as found in the literature and in the languages of this Special Issue. From an interactional point of view, engagement may be viewed as a form of “stance” (Du Bois 2007), in that it primarily positions the speech participants with respect to talked about events from the point of view of the speaker.

Keywords: Engagement; Scope; Intersubjectivity; Stance; Epistemic authority

1 Introduction

In this introduction we follow work by Evans and colleagues (Evans et al. 2018a, b) with an aim to further the exploration of ‘engagement’ as a linguistic category. In their work, engagement is defined as, “a grammatical system for encoding the relative accessibility of an entity or state of affairs to the speaker and addressee” (Evans et al. 2018a: 118). An instance of engagement can be seen in the Amazonian language Andoke (Landaburu 2007, cited in Evans et al. 2018a: 114):

(1) Andoke

| | | |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------|
| a. <i>páa</i> | <i>b-Λ</i> | <i>Λ-pó 'kə-i</i> |
| already | +SPKR+ADDR.ENGAG-3SG.INAN | 3SG.INAN-light-AGR |
| ‘The day is dawning (as we can both see).’ | | |

| | | |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------|
| b. <i>páa</i> | <i>kě-ø</i> | <i>Λ-pó 'kə-i</i> |
| already | +SPKR-ADDR.ENGAG-3SG.INAN | 3SG.INAN-light-AGR |
| ‘The day is dawning (as I witness, but which you are not aware of).’ | | |

In (1), the semantic contrast between the prefix *b-* (1a) and *kě-* (1b) is one of sharedness, i.e. whether the event referred to is equally accessible to the speaker and the addressee, or not. Example (1a) signals ‘shared

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access' whereas (1b) signals 'non-shared access' to the event.¹ The definition offered by Evans et al. and the examples used to illustrate engagement, cover a range of grammatical devices that encode some aspect of the speaker's assumptions regarding the addressee's access/non-access to events and discourse objects. The defining characteristics of such forms and constructions warrant further study and in this paper we aim our discussion at some issues that stand out as crucial in the ongoing exploration of engagement in grammar by drawing on data from the contributions of this Special Issue and from previous work by the authors (e.g. Bergqvist 2018a, 2017a, 2016, 2015).

We start by discussing the two dimensions of meaning that Evans et al. point to as being central for charting engagement in grammar, namely *scope* and *intersubjective distribution* (Evans et al. 2018: 118). Section 2 explores the scope properties of engagement markers and Section 3 discusses the intersubjective distribution of 'epistemic authority' and (cognitive) 'access', notions that appear crucial in accounting for engagement and its connection to other forms of epistemic marking. In Section 4, we consider the interactional basis for engagement as a form of stance-taking (see Du Bois 2007) and in Section 5 we summarize the main points of the paper.

2 Dimensions of engagement: scope

As Evans et al. (2018a: 118) note, engagement markers display different scope properties, i.e. the range that a marker has on a semantic and syntactic level (e.g. Boye 2012, Kockelman 2004). In terms of semantics, markers are distinguished according to whether they scope over a referent, a proposition, or a meta-proposition. On a syntactic level, engagement markers can be divided into ones that target noun phrases (i.e. referential scope) and ones that target the entire clause (i.e. propositional and meta-propositional scope). This variation is attested cross-linguistically as well as language-internally, with markers of different scope in the same language (e.g. Kogi, Section 2.1 and 3.1, below).

A marker's scope is partly reflected by its morpho-syntactic form, i.e. what type of grammatical element encodes engagement. We observe a tendency for engagement markers with referential scope to correspond to nominal forms, illustrated by the demonstrative systems of Turkish (Özyürek & Kita, n.d.) and Jahai (Burenhult 2003; see Evans et al. 2018a:123–131 for a discussion), and markers of definiteness and indefiniteness (Rumsey, this Special Issue, see below). Markers with clausal/propositional scope typically correspond to verbal elements like inflections, clitics, or auxiliaries. Such markers are found in the auxiliary verb constructions of Andoke (Landaburu 2007, illustrated in example (1) above) and Kogi (Bergqvist 2016), and as part of evidential systems (with meta-propositional scope) in Duna (San Roque 2008) and Angal (Sillitoe 2010, see Evans et al., 2018b, for details).

2.1 Referential scope: demonstratives and nominals

Demonstratives are naturally connected to the notion of engagement given their attention-guiding characteristics (Evans et al. 2018a). The main function associated with the exophoric use of demonstratives (i.e. establishing reference to an entity in the extra-linguistic world) is aligning the addressee's focus of attention with the speaker's in order to attain joint attention towards a referent (Diessel 2006). When referring to an object or a location in face-to-face conversation, a speaker typically evaluates the attentional state of the addressee and guides them until joint attention is achieved. Demonstratives convey spatial information about the referent in the surrounding situation (i.e. the location relative to the deictic center, see e.g. Diessel 1999), but in recent years an increasing number of demonstrative systems have been described in which some forms express contrasting attentional states alongside ones that signal spatial distinctions

¹ Landaburu discusses additional semantic contrasts involving other morphemes that occur in the same slot, which according to Landaburu produce interrogative sentences, but the contrast between *b-* and *kē-* must be regarded as primary given the default nature of declaratives over interrogatives (König & Siemund 2007: 285). See Section 3, below, for possible speech-act participant asymmetries and the role of sentence-type to signal these.

(see e.g. contributions in Levinson et al. 2018).

Such a demonstrative is found in the demonstrative system of Kogi (Colombia, Chibchan), where the use of the (ad)nominal demonstrative *twě(hiê)* is conditioned by joint attention (Knuchel, this Special Issue). *Twě(hiê)* is used when the speaker and the addressee both direct their attention to the same referent irrespective of its distance to the deictic center (origo). *Twě(hiê)* contrasts with two other (ad)nominal demonstratives, *hě(hiê)* and *kwě(hiê)*, which encode speaker proximity and remoteness, respectively. Data for this study comes from an interactional matcher-director task in which a director guides the matcher and directs their focus of attention to a referent in a pile of small clay objects by means of verbal description.² Example (2) shows the conclusion of a guiding sequence in which the speaker evaluates and finally confirms the addressee's choice of object. At this point, joint attention is established, which licenses the speaker's use of *twě*. In example (2), *twě* may be analyzed as a noun phrase that denotes the clay object described by the speaker.

(2) Kogi (Knuchel, this Special Issue)

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| <i>tweka</i> | <i>zhawa</i> | <i>tweka</i> | <i>zhawa</i> | <i>ese</i> | <i>twě</i> |
| LOC.ADV.ADDR | little | LOC.ADV.ADDR | little | DEM | DEM.TWE |
| 'A bit over there, a bit over there, that one.' | | | | | |

2.2 Propositional scope: clausal and verbal marking

Evans et al. (2018b) also note that nominal elements may become grammaticalized and develop functions that go beyond targeting nominal referents to scope over whole propositions (see e.g. Kratochvil 2011, on Abui demonstratives). This can be observed for the Papuan language Ku Waru (Rumsey, this Special Issue) where two postpositions mark indefiniteness, i.e. “known to the speaker but not to the addressee” and definiteness, “known to both”. These (in)definiteness markers normally have scope over the referent that is denoted by the noun phrase, but in addition to this nominal scope, Rumsey demonstrates that the definite marker in Ku Waru may also be combined with final verbs in which case it scopes over the entire clause. The markers are formally identical in both uses, the only difference being their position in the clause. The use of definite marking with propositional scope is illustrated in (3), where the speaker signals that the propositional content of the utterance is known to his conversation partners:

(3) Ku Waru (Rumsey, this Special Issue: 61)

- a. *ekepu* *wik* *autiyl* *o-ba* *pu-kum=iyl*
 now week many come-NF:3SG go-PPR:3SG=DEF
 ‘Now (as we know) many weeks have come and gone.’
- b. *ekepu* *wilyala* *yi=yl* *kul-um=iyl*
 now up.there man=DEF die-PFV:3SG=DEF
 ‘Now (as we know) the man up there [a well-known leader] has died.’

Olsson (this Special Issue) discusses data from the Papuan language Marind, where a verbal prefix *Vp*-serves to draw the addressee's focus of attention to an event that they are not aware of. Olsson calls this expression *absconditive*, given its primary function of revealing something that the speaker assumes is hidden to the addressee. This prefix can clearly be traced back to a demonstrative form, *Vpe* with spatial, distal semantics, but this distinction in distance is neutralized in the absconditive prefix.³ As a verbal prefix

² Knuchel's (this Special Issue) elicitation task is based on Seifart's (2003) “Shape Classifier Task”. The same method produced similar attentional contrasts in Jahai demonstratives (Burenhult 2003).

³ The vowel (V) in the demonstrative and the verbal prefix changes according to gender agreement.

Vp-, however, it retains the communicative function of directing the addressee's focus of attention in the speech situation.

Example (4) is an extract from a conversation between Marind speakers standing around a well. As one of the participants looks into the well, he believes he has spotted a fish swimming around inside it – something he assumes the addressee has not noticed, since he is looking in another direction. By using the absconditive marker, the speaker conveys this assumption in terms of non-shared access and direct the addressee's gaze to the event.

(4) Marind (Olsson, this Special Issue: 142)

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|---|
| <i>mbya ka,</i> | <i>ade!</i> | <i>kosi-awe</i> | <i>up-ø- kw-ayit-a</i> |
| no | EXCLAM | small-fish(II) | ABSC:II-3SG.A- INESS-run.around:3SG.U-EXT |

'No, wait! There's a little fish swimming around inside.'

The Australian language Murrinhpatha signals engagement by means of verbal inflection with clausal scope (Mansfield, this Special Issue). In Murrinhpatha, an initial *k*-alternation in third-person, non-future verb forms, signals the speaker's epistemic primacy over the addressee. When using the *k*-alternation (labelled "speaker authority" by Mansfield), the speaker assumes that the addressee does not attend to, nor knows about a certain state of affairs, and thus indicates his/her exclusive perceptual and/or epistemic access to it. Verbs with the *k*-alternation contrast with unmarked verbs that apply in contexts in which shared access is assumed. In example (5), three Murrinhpatha speakers are being recorded while agreeing on a topic of discussion for the recording session. One of the participants suddenly notices that the linguist, standing close by, is looking at them and then suggests that they should start the conversation. By marking the verb 'watching' with the *k*-alternation, the speaker portrays the event (i.e. the "whitefella" watching them), as something presently unattended to by his conversation partners, but also as something that concerns them:

(5) Murrinhpatha (Mansfield, this Special Issue: 36)

| | | | |
|-----------|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Ku</i> | <i>pangathu</i> | <i>kirrim-nhi-bath-nime</i> | <i>start=warda</i> |
| ANIM | DIST | watch.3SG.AUTH-1INC.OBJ-watch-PC.M | start=SEQ |

'That whitefella is watching us, (let's) start!'

The marking of speaker authority in Murrinhpatha is also found with existential and locative verbs to direct the addressee's attention to the existence or location of an object that they may not be aware of.

However, it is not always the case that verbal marking signaling engagement has clausal scope. In the Australian language Ungarinyin, there is a verbal marker that targets a referent, rather than a proposition (Spronck, this Special Issue). The Ungarinyin "definite subject marker" *irra₂-* (see Rumsey 1982) signals coreferentiality between the grammatical subject of a clause with the subject of the immediately preceding clause, and it is often used to disambiguate subject identity among several potential referents. As Spronck (this Special Issue) argues, the function of the definite subject marker can be linked to engagement as "it signals the epistemic status of the subject referent 'known'/'accessible' to both the speaker and the addressee". While the marker clearly belongs to the verbal domain (i.e. it appears between person prefixes and the verb stem), it has referential, rather than propositional scope.

3 Dimensions of engagement: intersubjective distribution

The intersubjective distribution conveyed by a marker of engagement targets a semantic contrast between shared and non-shared access.⁴ The use of the term access is motivated by the fact that engagement markers may be unspecified with respect to what kind of access a SAP has to some event, but also because the semantic contrast targets different kinds of access depending on differences in grammatical status, as

⁴ This contrast is called "symmetrical"/ "asymmetrical" in the work of Bergqvist (e.g. 2015, 2016).

outlined above (see Section 3.1 and 3.2, below for a detailed discussion). The number of logically possible contrasts is shown in Figure 1.

- | | | | |
|----|---------|---|-----------|
| 1. | Speaker | > | Addressee |
| 2. | Speaker | = | Addressee |
| 3. | Speaker | < | Addressee |
| 4. | Speaker | – | Addressee |

Figure 1: Possible distributions of access between speaker and addressee

The (logically) possible contrasts in Figure 1 are as follows: 1. Speaker non-shared, 2. Speaker-Addressee shared, 3. Addressee non-shared, 4. Speaker-Addressee non-shared. By saying that access to an event is non-shared from the perspective of the speaker, as in the first contrast of Figure 1, we mean that the speaker states that s/he has access to an event and at the same time assumes that the addressee does not have similar access to that event. The second contrast, shared access, means that the speaker makes an assumption that his/her access to an event is shared by the addressee. The third contrast states that the speaker assumes the addressee to have access to an event, which the speaker does not have access to. Lastly, the fourth contrast is one where the speaker does not have access, but at the same time, s/he does not assume that the addressee has access either. The access asymmetries in Figure 1 may be illustrated by looking at how these are reflected (but not encoded) in the choice of sentence-type:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (6) | |
| a. <i>This is how you do it.</i> | (speaker non-shared; informing) |
| b. <i>This is how you do it, right?</i> | (speaker-addressee shared; inviting agreement) |
| c. <i>Is this how you do it?</i> | (addressee non-shared; asking) |
| d. <i>Could this be how you do it?</i> | (speaker-addressee non-shared; speculating) |

The use of sentence-type distinctions to illustrate epistemic contrasts between the SAPs rests on assumptions about how these are used in languages that have them (cf. König & Siemund 2007; Givón 1990) and while some of these assumptions may be subject to further revision, we take them at face value for the purposes of the present discussion (see Bergqvist 2017, 2018b, on the role of sentence-type in epistemic marking). It has been argued that the primary function of an unqualified, declarative statement is to provide the addressee with new information; information that the speaker has, but which s/he assumes is new to the addressee (e.g. Givón 1990: 291). However, in spontaneous conversation, such unqualified statements are rare (cf. Holmes 1986). This purported property of declaratives in (6a) may be contrasted to the one in (6b) where the speaker, by means of a tag (“right?”), seeks the agreement from the addressee with respect to an event that the speaker and the addressee are attending to. By asking a (interrogative) question in (6c), the speaker places the addressee in charge of evaluating the event without explicitly stating his/her own commitment to the same event. However, there is a strong expectation of an affirmative response in uttering a polar question (Stivers et al. 2011), but this is an implication that is cancellable by a negative response from the addressee. Lastly, in (6d) the speaker speculates by means of an epistemic modal construction and an interrogative sentence-type about the event without explicitly expecting a committing response from the addressee.

4 Assigning epistemic authority

While the examples in (6) are included to illustrate the possible configurations of speaker-addressee access (see Figure 1), there are some important differences between these and engagement markers in a language such as Kogi (Bergqvist 2016; see Evans et al. 2018b). One important difference is that English requires

syntactic and constructional changes to the declarative (default) construction in order to convey (but not encode) differences in epistemic access between the SAPs. These are divided into a (mainly) declarative set (6a, b) and an interrogative set (6c, d). Kogi, on the other hand encodes these differences by means of a closed set of prefixes that attach to auxiliary verbs in declarative contexts. Additionally, Kogi grammar allows for the possibility of anchoring the shared/non-shared contrast with the speaker, or the addressee. This produces other possibilities compared to the contrasts outlined in Figure 1, above.

(7) Kogi

a. *hekí na-tũ-na-kwá*
 DEM SPKR.ASYM-see-1SG-REM.PST
 ‘That’s how it was.’ (lit. ‘That’s what I saw.’)

b. *hekí ni-tũ-na-kwá*
 DEM SPKR.SYM-see-1SG-REM.PST
 ‘That’s how it was.’ (lit. ‘That’s what I saw.’)

c. *hekí shi-tũ-na-kwá*
 DEM ADDR.SYM-see-1SG-REM.PST
 ‘That’s how it was.’ (lit. ‘That’s what I saw.’)

d. *hekí sha-tũ-na-kwá*
 DEM ADDR.ASYM-see-1SG-REM.PST
 ‘That’s how it was.’ (lit. ‘that’s what I saw.’)

(Elicited forms, field notes 120520; see Bergqvist 2016, for a detailed discussion)

The example sentences in (7) receive the same translation by Kogi speakers because they share the same grammatical status (declarative) and propositional content (i.e. ‘that’s how it was’). The semantic contrasts found in the *na-/ni-/shi-/sha-* forms do not correspond to sentence-type distinctions, although they may convey certain speech-acts, such as statements and questions, which, of course, are the corresponding pragmatic functions of formal sentence-type distinctions (König & Siemund 2007). The engagement prefixes of Kogi can be grouped into speaker-perspective and addressee-perspective forms, where *na-/ni-* belong to the former and *shi-/sha-* to the latter (see Bergqvist 2016, for details). This grouping is analogous to a distinction between the declarative and the interrogative sentence-types, without sharing its formal properties. As a closed set of verbal inflections, the prefixes only occur in declarative sentences: the speaker-perspective form, *na-* signals the speaker’s non-shared access to an event, whereas *ni-* signals shared access between the speaker and the addressee, from the perspective of the speaker; the addressee-perspective form *shi-* signals shared access between the speaker and the addressee, from the perspective of the addressee and *sha-* signals the addressee’s non-shared access to an event.

The claim that epistemic markers can be anchored to the speaker and/or the addressee is not new, nor unique to engagement, but such shifts are usually produced by changes of sentence-type. Epistemic modals and evidentials can display such properties when occurring in interrogative sentences. Consider the following examples from Duna (San Roque et al. 2017: 128-129):

(8) Duna

a. *ai-ka sutia?*
 who-ERG strike.PFV.VIS
 ‘Who struck him (you saw)?’

b. a, *yiAo honene-ka=rape sako*
 ah nothing thing-ERG=UNC be.confused
makura-na si wa-ye sutia

club-SPEC hold come-DEP strike.PFV.VIS
 ‘Ah, something, I don’t know what it was, brought a club and hit him (I saw).’

In example (8), the evidential value of *-tia* is anchored to the addressee in the content question (8a) and to the speaker in the response (8b). This anchoring is the result of a change in sentence-type from interrogative to declarative. The fact that engagement markers in Kogi encode which speech-act participant is charged with primacy in an epistemic sense without having to draw on changes in sentence-type, is more rarely reported in the literature (but see Bergqvist 2017, 2018b; San Roque 2015). The obvious consequence of signaling the addressee’s epistemic primacy in Kogi by means of *shi-/sha-* is that such utterances appear to be questions (albeit not interrogatives, for reasons just stated). This consequence is also known from the use of modal particles in Swedish, where the form *väl* (‘surely’, ‘right?’) requires a separator in the form of a question mark although the sentence is declarative by form (usually signaled by a full stop):

(9) Swedish

A: *Det sitter en dude på en nån slags terrass.*
 it sit.PRS one dude on one some kind terrace
 ‘There is a dude sitting on some kind of terrace.’

B: *Jaa. Det är väl framför allt en kille i förgrunden som*
 Yes it be.PRS MP above all a guy in foreground that
verkar berätta nåt för de här tre personerna som lyssnar, eller?
 seems tell something to these three persons that listen.PRS or
 ‘Yes. Above all, (I’d say) there is a guy in the foreground, who appears to be telling these three people who are listening, something, right?’
 (Bergqvist 2019)

The Swedish modal particle *väl* can only occur in declarative sentences, but always produces a question-like utterance. *Väl* carries the speaker’s assertion while at the same time seeking agreement from the addressee by way of placing epistemic authority with the addressee. Admittedly, *väl* can also signal such (dis)placement of epistemic authority with a third person, but in its agreement seeking function, *väl* prototypically targets the evaluation of the addressee. *Väl* may be contrasted to *ju* (‘of course’, ‘obviously’), which also has an agreement seeking function, but placing the epistemic authority with the speaker (Aijmer 1977, cf. Aijmer & Simon Vandenberg 2007). The modal particles *ju* and *väl* could in fact be argued to share the engagement semantics found with *ni-* and *shi-* in Kogi and serve as an additional illustration of such semantics from the perspective of a European language.

Judging from engagement marking in Kogi, we may conclude that the options for intersubjective distribution go beyond shared vs. non-shared to also target the epistemic authority of one of the speech-act participants. From the brief comparison to the Swedish modal particles above, this possibility is also available in languages that have less elaborate forms of engagement marking than the one described for Kogi. Arguably, the notion of epistemic authority is a non-trivial feature of epistemic marking, more generally (see Bergqvist, under review) and there is reason to view it as a non-defeasible component of engagement that concerns what kind of access is encoded in, or implied by forms (see Section 4.1, below).

4.1 Claiming access and accessibility

The notion of “accessibility” features in Evans et al.’s definition of engagement, namely “a grammatical system for encoding the relative accessibility of an entity or state of affairs to the speaker and addressee” (2018a: 118). The notion of accessibility subsumes different kinds of access to states of affairs, or referents, as evident from the data discussed in this paper.

One kind of access relates to perception in the sense that a person can have access to a referent or a state of affairs because it is visible to them. This kind of access is illustrated by the way engagement is found with evidentials (e.g. Example 8, above, San Roque 2008, 2015), but it is also found with demonstratives that encode the visibility of a referent with respect to the speech participants (Diessel 1999: 41–42). Another kind of access is familiar from cognitively oriented discourse analysis where a referent or state of affairs can be deemed accessible when it is at the front of the person's mind (cf. Ariel 1990). Such cognitive accessibility is typically rooted in activating a referent or a state of affairs by previous mention. Lastly, the term access has also been used in connection with another epistemic category, namely 'egophoricity', which signals "epistemic access" to events subject to the involvement of the speech act participants (see Floyd et al. 2018, Bergqvist & Knuchel 2017).

With respect to engagement marking, it is clear that all of these instantiations of access are attested, i.e. perceptual, cognitive, discourse based, and epistemic (see below). In addition to these, engagement marking may also signal access to a proposition in terms of expectations, beliefs, and personal opinions (see Bergqvist 2017, for a discussion). In the case of demonstratives, perceptual accessibility is not only reflected in the potential visibility of a referent, but also in the speaker's estimation of whether their interlocutor is attending to the referent, as in the case of Kogi. As Knuchel (this Special Issue) shows, the demonstrative *twě* is typically licensed by shared access based on visual access, e.g. when the speaker assumes that the addressee has shifted their gaze to the referent in question. However, some uses of *twě* in Knuchel's data cannot be accounted for in terms of visual perception, but instead refer to instances when the object of reference was a topic in the preceding discourse. In these cases, the crucial factor is the cognitive accessibility of the referent by way of previous mention. The definite/indefinite markers of Ku Waru draw on a similar type of accessibility. Rumsey (this Special Issue) describes "endophorically based definite marking" in which a referent is initially introduced into discourse as either unmarked, or marked as indefinite, and later referred to with a definite marker once the speaker assumes the addressee knows about the referent.

Perceptual access is also at play in the Marind "absconditive" prefixes (Olsson, this Special Issue), which function to divert the addressee's focus of attention to an event, but also serve to update the common ground (in discourse) by refuting the addressee's (assumed) presuppositions. By using the absconditive, a speaker may signal that a certain state of affairs does not match the addressee's preexisting expectations.

Engagement marking in Murrinhpatha (Mansfield, this Special Issue) may involve perceptual access in cases where the speaker directs the addressee's focus of attention to an event that they are not aware of, but it also targets access to personally integrated, cultural knowledge to which a member of the Murrinhpatha community may have special epistemic rights (see Section 5).

It is evident that the notion of access has a range of meanings that depend on language specific and pragmatic circumstances. At present, we may conclude that access can be situational by drawing on what the participants can perceive, or have learned from the previous verbal exchange, but also target integrated world/cultural knowledge, and/or personal knowledge of past experiences. These distinct kinds of access correlate with the grammatical status of forms, where e.g. nominal elements, such as demonstratives and determiners, tend to signal situational access (perceptual, cognitive, discourse access), while verbal marking often conveys accessibility to events in terms of knowledge and rights to knowledge.

5 Engagement as stance

While the *na-/ni-/shi-/sha*-prefixes of Kogi (see Section 4, above) constitute a separate paradigm, and as such, a grammatical sub-system in Kogi grammar, they are not used to the same degree by all speakers, and depending on genre of speech, they may in fact be quite rarely used. So, despite their paradigmatic organization, they are not an obligatory part of Kogi grammar (Bergqvist 2016; cf. Evans et al. 2018b). Such distributional features are also shared with other forms of epistemic marking (see Gipper 2018; Grzech 2016), including the Swedish modal particles discussed above. Swedish modal particles are not obligatory in Swedish (nor in any other Germanic language that has them), but they are frequent in spoken Swedish (see

Bergqvist 2017). The issue of obligatoriness usually plays a part in establishing the grammatical status of morphemes. This consideration is also made explicit in theories of grammaticalization where lexical words become inflectional affixes e.g. by processes of semantic bleaching, phonetic erosion, and by becoming an obligatory part of the clause (e.g. Bybee et al. 1994). However, it is unclear how important obligatoriness is for the grammatical status of forms, especially in the case of epistemic marking and those parts of grammar that signal communicative intentions and manage dialogic interaction (cf. Du Bois 2014; Evans 2012). Based on what we currently know about engagement, it would be unexpected to find a language with (a set of) engagement markers that are obligatory in every utterance. The reason for this is that engagement positions the speech-act participants with respect to some talked about event in an epistemic sense; this positioning may target aspects of the attention, memory, belief, expectation, and knowledge of the speaker and the speaker's estimation of the addressee's corresponding awareness. Ultimately, however, it is futile to consider these modes of access to an event unless the speaker also makes an assertion and claims (epistemic) authority concerning the event in question. Unless the speaker is committed, involved, and indeed, engaged in talking about an event, the use of engagement marking will likely be absent.

A speaker's commitment/engagement to an event can be expressed for various reasons, but it will always require the speaker's involvement and consequent authority in talking about such events. Not all utterances are about events that involve the speaker, meaning that engagement is not required for all utterances. Speakers sometimes talk about things that do not concern themselves, nor their addressees. Only those utterances that feature an evaluation of an event and/or a positioning of the speaker with respect to that event are candidates for engagement marking.

This is evident in data that was collected using the "Family Problems Picture Task" (FPPT, described in detail in San Roque et al. 2012) where the first stage of the task consists of describing the portrayed contents in a set of drawn images. In the Kogi example in (10), one speaker considers the possible setting and living place for the people in one of the images:

(10) Kogi

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| <i>nibuni</i> | <i>keizha-k</i> | <i>i-nok-ka-kwě</i> |
| sea | shore-LOC | LOC-be-HAB-[3]PL |

'They live on the coast.'

There is no engagement marking in (10) and no other forms of qualification such as hedges, or boosters that modify the stance of the speaker with respect to their assertion. In example (11), from the same stage of the task, the speaker imagines a verbal interaction between two of the portrayed (male) characters that concerns the supposed infidelity of one man's wife:

(11) Kogi

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|---------------------|
| <i>mihi</i> | <i>munzhi</i> | <i>sigi</i> | <i>na</i> | <i>hoklé</i> | <i>no</i> | <i>ne</i> | <i>tũ</i> | <i>nuge</i> | <i>ni-na</i> |
| 2SG.POSS | woman | man | with | play | be | PST | see | 1SG.PST | SPKR.SYM-be |

ak-mě-a-tukka
3SG.IOBJ-say-TH-PROG[3SG]
'I saw that your wife was fooling around with (another) man, he was telling him.'

Here, the reported actor-speaker signals his epistemic authority by using *ni-* (speaker-symmetric), as prompted by his involvement in the event as an observer. The shared access component of *ni-* conveys inclusion of the actor-addressee, who may already be aware of this state of affairs, given that the one "fooling around" is the recipient's wife. Admittedly, it is difficult to ascertain if the choice of *ni-* in (11) is due to the fact that the topic of the exchange is the actor-addressee's wife and thus forms part of his epistemic territory (cf. Kamio 1994 for a definition of "territories of information"), or if the actor-speaker simply cannot be sure that his observation is exclusive (i.e. non-shared). Given the topic of the fictional exchange (of which only the first part is included here), it is arguably the case that both actors are involved. It is not a topic of casual conversation, but one which may have dire consequences for the actors in the task

(a design-theme of the picture task, more generally). For this reason, the appearance of the engagement marker, *ni-* (speaker authority, shared access), is motivated by its function to situate the proposition with respect to the two actors.

Example (12) from the same task demonstrates that differences in social status, may also evoke the use of engagement marking in Kogi. The participants performing the task are a young Kogi couple where the man is a few years senior to his female partner. In producing the exchange seen in example (12), the male speaker leads the conversation, while his female interlocutor is less confident in conversing about the pictures. This status-asymmetry is reflected by the female speaker's use of addressee-authority forms in requesting her partner's opinion, while he, in turn, replies with speaker-authority forms, as shown in the second line of example (12). Even though the contents of the picture discussed are available to both participants, the male speaker claims exclusive knowledge of the identity of the characters:

(12)

A: *gwatshak* *hěkwěki hi shā?*
 gwatshak *hě-kwě-ki* *hi* *shi-na*
 so DEM-PL-SW what ADDR.SYM-be
 'So, these guys, what are they?'

B: *ěkwěki hweskwě sankaldakwě nakldá.*
 ěkwěki *hweskwě* *sankaldakwě* *nak-na*
 DEM-PL-SW judge-PL head-PL SPKR.ASYM-be
 'They are judges, chiefs.'

Comparable observations are made by Mansfield (this Special Issue: 38-40) for the FPPT in Murrinhpatha, where the speaker-authority inflection was used by participants to convey an "authoritative stance" in the interaction, motivated by the social status and seniority of the speaker. This use of speaker authority forms in Murrinhpatha also depends on genre and occurs frequently in narratives concerning kinship, country, or totems. Having knowledge in these domains is considered an inalienable epistemic right in the Murrinhpatha community, something that also becomes clear in conversations with non-Murrinhpatha addressees, who naturally lack such rights.

In light of these observations, we may conclude that the prerequisite for signaling engagement is also an inherent feature of "stance", a concept that has wide application in the linguistics literature, and which broadly concerns how speakers position themselves with respect to some topic of conversation (see Evans et al. 2018a: 118–119, for a discussion). Du Bois (2007) offers a theory of stance by using the heuristic of a "stance triangle", where the three sides of the triangle detail the component parts of how speakers adopt a stance towards some discourse object. One side features the speaker's evaluation (e.g. *that's great!*) and/or positioning (e.g. *I'm fine.*), a second side describes the addressee's (previous/assumed) evaluation and positioning, and a third side describes the intersubjective alignment between the two subjects (Du Bois 2007: 159). In uttering a phrase like, *me too*, or *so do I*, a speaker-subject may also align with a previous evaluation/positioning made by their interlocutor with respect to an object of discourse. Du Bois' notion of alignment targets those parts of the lexicon/grammar that make salient reference to a previous stance taken by another speaker (or the current one), as they can be seen across turns:

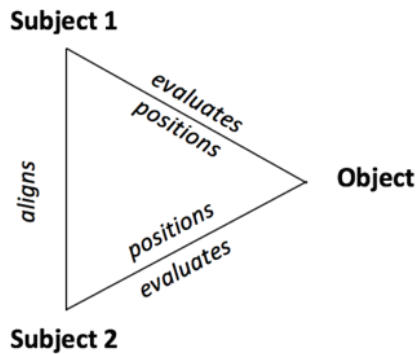


Figure 2: The stance triangle (after Du Bois 2007: 163)

The functional motivation for engagement may be viewed as hinging on stance, given the role of (non-) alignment in both notions. This close connection between stance and engagement has also been noted in discourse studies by Hyland (2005) and others (e.g. White 2003). In this research tradition, stance is conceived of as reflecting the subjective positioning of the speaker, while engagement targets the speaker's consideration of the addressee. Hyland (2005) lists “hedges” (*perhaps*) and “boosters” (*surely*) as devices for stance-taking and “appeals to shared knowledge” (*of course*) and “directives” (*consider x*) as devices that signal engagement (Hyland 2005: 178, 182). Even though Hyland discusses stance and engagement as separate concepts, the semantic overlap between devices used to signal both notions, suggest that stance and engagement cannot be kept separate. We may, in fact, illustrate engagement as stance using a modified version of Du Bois' stance triangle (Figure 3, below). A similar graphic representation was originally used by Bergqvist (2018a) to account for egophoric marking in Ika (Chibchan, Colombia) and has natural applicability in the present discussion given the high degree of functional overlap between egophoric marking in Ika and engagement marking in Kogi (see Bergqvist 2018b, for a discussion):

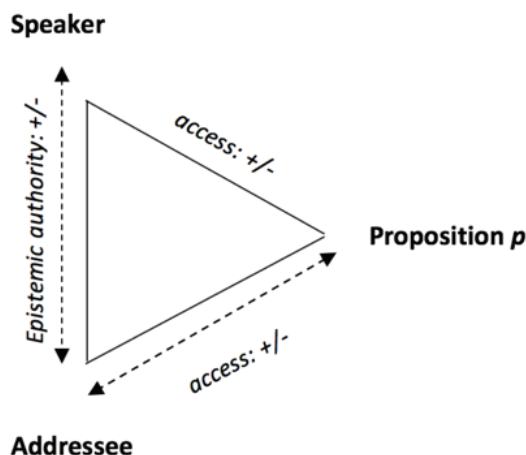


Figure 3: Engagement as stance (after Bergqvist 2018a; based on Du Bois 2007)

The triangle in Figure 3 contains all features that concern the intersubjective distribution of access (see Section 3, above) with an added dimension specifying epistemic authority as belonging to the speaker, or the addressee, or both. The dotted lines along the two dimensions, addressee-access and epistemic authority signal the speaker's assumption about the values on these dimensions. The speaker can claim shared access with the addressee, and/or epistemic authority, but such claims can be refuted by the addressee in the following turn. Only the speaker's own assertion concerning access to an event is direct

(i.e. non-assumptive) in the sense that it belongs to the speaker from his/her involvement in the event. The speaker's involvement is, of course, what motivates stance-taking in the first place.

Figure 3 can be used as a descriptive representation of engagement in a language like Kogi, where e.g. *ni-* may be analyzed as signaling: 1) speaker access, 2) addressee access, 3) speaker authority. A complete account of the *na-/ni-/shi-/sha-*prefixes of Kogi along the same parameters is summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: Engagement values for *na-/ni-/shi-/sha* according to Figure 3.

| Engagement marker | Epistemic authority | Speaker access | Addressee access |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|
| <i>na-</i> | Speaker | + | - |
| <i>ni-</i> | Speaker | + | + |
| <i>shi-</i> | Addressee | + | + |
| <i>sha-</i> | Addressee | - | + |

Given that access is under-specified in Kogi engagement marking, it may be indicated in a binary way without glossing over important features belonging to this dimension of meaning (see Bergqvist 2016, for details). It should be noted here that while Kogi has a set of forms that permit a separation between epistemic access and authority, this is not something that we find with all systems of engagement marking. In some languages, the two may conflate, or alternatively depend on sentence-type alternations (see Section 3, above). Motivated by the discussion of Kogi above, we argue that a definition of engagement must explicitly feature the notion of epistemic authority *per* the involvement of the speaker. Given that taking a stance is a crucial requirement for using an engagement markers, speaker/addressee involvement is entailed. The epistemic consequence of involvement is authority and if involvement is absent from a verbal exchange, then so is engagement marking.

6 Discussion

Unsurprisingly, semantic features found with forms that have developed into engagement markers are commonly preserved in the grammaticalization process and their heterogenous origins correspond to the diversity of attested markers. In the papers of this Special Issue, we observe that demonstrative forms may retain part of their function to direct the attention of the addressee in their new role as engagement marker (Section 2.2, Olsson, this Special Issue; cf. Evans et al. 2018b: 159-162). Nominal definite markers may retain a partly discourse regulating function in their new function as engagement markers with clausal scope (Section 2.2, above, Rumsey, this Special Issue).

Elsewhere, Bergqvist (2018c) demonstrates how sentence-type markers that develop engagement semantics, encode previously implied epistemic conventions that underlie the contrastive use of declaratives and interrogatives (Bergqvist 2018b; cf. Givón 1990). Person markers may equally encode epistemic aspects associated with speaker-roles (Goffman 1981, “principal”) that in their original function are implied and subject to contextual cues (Bergqvist 2018c, Bergqvist & Kittilä 2017). Such diverse forms with equally diverse origins are all deictics (cf. shifters, Jakobson 1971), which means that they are anchored to a context where the subjective positioning of the speaker and the addressee is at center stage. The deictic nature of attested engagement markers is indicative of their primary function to signal speaker stance and the speaker's estimation of the addressee's stance with respect to the same event (see Bergqvist 2018a).

In an analytical sense, it would be a fallacy to regard the mental directedness of the speech-act participants as an ontologically definable domain that somehow can be measured against an objectively definable context. Such an analysis would miss the point entirely. The distribution of engagement markers is motivated by a communicative need to position the speech-act participants with respect to events in an epistemic sense, not in terms of objective access-configuration. Notions such as “objective” (facts) still hold a place in modern linguistic descriptions of epistemic modality, although it remains unclear to whom this

objectiveness belongs (see e.g. Nuyts 2001 for a discussion). Research in this field betray a strong desire to account for the (epistemic) perspectives of the speech-act participants in terms of “objectively verifiable” circumstances. Without going into the debate on the objective/relative nature of reality, the idea that there is a referentially salient and objectively verifiable truth underlying all linguistic exchanges stands in the way of affording the dialogical negotiation of the common ground and the differing perspectives of speakers its rightful place. Linguists may also be hesitant to consider notions such as “shared” information between the speaker and the addressee by virtue of the argument that a speaker (or a linguist) can never know what is inside the head of the addressee (e.g. Austin 1946). Therefore, shared information cannot exist. While this argument may have some currency in a philosophical debate, it is plain to see for any linguist who has worked on non-prompted, natural conversation that speakers frequently act as if they know what the addressee knows and believes. Speakers make accusations on the basis of what their interlocutor should know, and they may equally attempt to align with the other’s perspective, sometimes using very similar linguistic resources and strategies (e.g. Haviland 1989).

Historically, epistemic markers and epistemic systems signaling epistemic modality and evidentiality have been described and analyzed, by and large, using monological/narrative, sometimes written, texts in addition to individual, elicited examples as a basis for the semantic analysis of forms. Such materials may work well for the description of certain aspects of grammar (e.g. general syntactic phenomena and basic morpho-syntactic processes), but given the nature of epistemic marking as a primary means to situate the speaker and the addressee against some talked-about event in an epistemic sense (i.e. by taking a stance), this kind of data is not ideal. Given the crucial role of involvement as grounds for epistemic authority, it is a substantial challenge to develop means to investigate this defining component of engagement given that it rests entirely on the communicative stance of the speaker. It is simply not enough to provide contextual cues that target cognitive asymmetries in terms of attentional, perceptual, or experiential access. Any stimuli that aims at investigating the use and function of engagement markers, must be developed with this in mind.

There are several challenges in the continued exploration of engagement in terms of methodology, data quality, and mode of analysis. Potential rewards include an improved understanding of the pragmatics/ semantics interface, as well as, a deepened understanding of human sociality from the perspective of language and grammar.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---------------------|
| 1 | first person |
| 2 | second person |
| 3 | third person |
| A | actor |
| ABSC | absconditive |
| ADDR | addressee |
| ADV | adverbial |
| AGR | agreement |
| ANIM | animate |
| ASYM | asymmetrical access |
| AUTH | speaker authority |
| DEF | definite |
| DEM | demonstrative |
| DEP | dependent verb |
| DIST | distal |
| ENGAG | engagement |

| | |
|--------|----------------------|
| ERG | ergative |
| EXCLAM | exclamative |
| HAB | habitual |
| INAN | inanimate |
| INC | inclusive |
| INESS | inessive |
| IOBJ | indirect object |
| LOC | locative |
| M | masculine |
| NF | non-final verb |
| OBJ | object |
| PC | paucal |
| PFV | perfective |
| PL | plural |
| POSS | possessive |
| PPR | present progressive |
| PROG | progressive |
| PRS | present |
| PST | Past |
| REM | remote |
| SEQ | sequential |
| SG | singular |
| SPEC | specific |
| SPKR | speaker |
| SW | switch topic |
| SYM | symmetrical access |
| TH | thematic vowel |
| U | undergoer |
| UNC | uncertainty |
| VIS | visual evidentiality |

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