To Flip or Not to Flip: Evidentials in Interrogatives

Diti Bhadra
Rutgers University

OVERVIEW: Following several recent studies of evidentials in the world's languages (Garrett 2001 – for Tibetan; Faller 2002 – for Cuzco Quechua; Tenny and Speas 2004 – for English; Murray 2010 – for Cheyenne; Lim 2011, Lim and Lee 2012 – for Korean), a well-known property of evidentials is taken to be the norm: when evidentials occur in interrogatives, they shift the perspective/anchoring of the evidential from the utterer's to the addressee's. This phenomenon has been given several names: *origo shift* (Garrett 2001), *interrogative flip* (Tenny 2006), *evidential perspective shift* (Lim and Lee 2012). Going with Tenny's terminology for the purposes of this paper, we present a Bangla evidential– *naki* - that appears to be unique. *Naki* does not undergo the interrogative flip in questions. The evidential is anchored to the speaker regardless of the speech act. All data presented in this work match the author's native speaker intuitions and has been confirmed with 30 native speakers of Bangla via extensive fieldwork.

DATA: In addition to the lack of interrogative flip, *naki* has another special property – depending on syntactic position, it can denote either INFERENTIAL or REPORTATIVE evidentiality. These evidence types are correlated with naki appearing clause-finally or clause-medially, respectively:

(1) *Context: Ram sees Shyam cut the line at the buffet lunch and go straight for the fish. Ram asks Shyam's friend, Sita, the following:*

Shyam maach khete bhalobashe **naki**? INFERENTIAL EVIDENCE
Shyam fish   eat.IMPV love.3P. naki
'(I infer that) Shyam likes to eat fish, (is it true)?'

(2) *Context: Ram heard a rumor about Shyam and is now asking Shyam's mother about it:*

Shyam **naki** America jacche? REPORTATIVE EVIDENCE
Shyam naki America go.PROG.3P
(I heard that) Shyam is going to America (is it true)?'

A syntactic analysis of the differential positions is in Bhadra (2016), the details of which need not concern us here. The **crucial observation** to make here is that in both (1) and (2), the *speaker*'s source of evidence is salient, and *not the addressee's*. Contrast this with a Cheyenne example (Murray 2010) in which the interrogative crucially invokes the addressee's evidence:

(3) Mó=é-x-hóˈtahevá-**hooˈo**   Aénohe?
    y/n=3-REM. PST-win-NAR.3SG Hawk
    'Given the stories you heard, did Hawk win?'   (Hearer assumed to have narrative evidence).

In all the studies of the interrogative flip mentioned above, evidentials in assertions are anchored to the utterer, and shift in questions. To support the claim that *naki* doesn't shift perspectives based on the speech act, (4) below is an example of the evidential in a declarative, where the anchor is again only the speaker:

(4) Shyam **naki** America jacche.
    Shyam naki America go.PROG.3P
    '(I heard that) Shyam is going to America.'   DECLARATIVE

Another important property of *naki*-questions (naki-Qs) that sets them apart is that naki-Qs are *always biased.* In uttering a naki-Q, the speaker signals that he is expecting one answer to be true

over the other (usually the polarity of the bias matches the polarity of the prejacent). This kind of speaker bias is not attested with other evidentials in questions. The only bias some authors mention is the expectation that the speaker has that the addressee will know/knows the answer based on their knowledge state, but this speaker bias of targeting the answer set of the polar question by expecting *p* over ¬ *p* or vice versa is unique to naki-Qs. Thus, in (1-2) the speaker has a strong, uncancellable bias towards S liking to eat fish and S going to USA, respectively. The questions that arise then are: what is the nature of this Bangla evidential that blocks the interrogative flip? What is the relationship between evidentiality and bias - does the flip not happen because of the presence of the bias or does the bias arise because there is no flip?

ANALYSIS: To give an account of the empirical facts above, we develop an analysis inspired by Lim and Lee's (2012) of Korean evidentials where an evidential denotes a set of characters, instead of a set of propositions. Crucially, we will claim that Bangla *naki cannot* overwrite the context parameter against which the prejacent is evaluated, in contrast to Korean evidentials. Additionally, we will invoke Tenny and Speas's (2004) idea of a sentient Seat-of-Knowledge (SOK) argument that is c-commanded and controlled by either of the discourse participants. The meaning of *naki* then is three-fold in this system:

(5) Given utterance context c*, world of evaluation w*, and the prejacent Φ of type <s,t>:
  (i) $[\![naki]\!]^{c^*,w^*} ([\![\Phi]\!]^{c^*,w^*}) = \lambda c^*$: UTTERER (c*) has rep./inf. evidence for Φ. λw^*. $[\![\Phi]\!]^{c^*,w^*}$
  (ii) SOK ($[\![\Phi]\!]^{c^*,w^*}$) = λx. λw^*. SOK (x) iff x (c*) has evidence for Φ in w*.
(iii) A sentient entity having the property of SOK w.r.t. Φ in c*,w* believes $[\![\Phi]\!]^{c^*,w^*}$ =1.

Unlike *-te-* in Korean, (5i) indicates that *naki* returns a character with the same utterance context variable, which means that the evidential presupposition contained in (i) (i.e. the UTTERER has reportative (or inferential) evidence) is *still anchored to the speaker*. This results in the seat-of-knowledge being the speaker, given clause (ii). Combining this with the set of answers in the polar question in (3), via Pointwise Functional Application, following Lim and Lee, we get:

(6) $[\![naki]\!]^{c^*,w^*}$ ($\{\lambda w^*.[\![$S is going to US(c*)$]\!]^{c^*,w^*}$, $\lambda w^*.[\![$S is not going to US(c*)$]\!]^{c^*,w^*}\}$) = $\{[\![naki]\!]^{c^*,w^*}(\lambda w^*.[\![$S is going to US(c*)$]\!]^{c^*,w^*}$,$[\![naki]\!]^{c^*,w^*}(\lambda w^*.[\![$S is not going to US(c*)$]\!]^{c^*,w^*}$)$\}$.

Factoring in the evidence presupposition in (5i), we get the two answers for the question in (3):

(7) (naki (C_{+POLQ})) = $\{\lambda c^*$: UTTERER (c*) has rep./inf. evidence that S is going to US. λw^*. $[\![$S is going to US(c*)$]\!]^{c^*,w^*}$, λc^*: UTTERER (c*) has rep./inf. evidence that S is not going to US. λw^*. $[\![$S is not going to US(c*)$]\!]^{c^*,w^*}\}$.

The claim then is that the crucial difference between languages that have the flip and that don't lies in the evidentials in the former having the power to overwrite the context parameter with a new variable that can get bound by the addressee in interrogatives, while the evidentials in the latter do not. In the latter, the speaker/utterer controls the locus of evidence and the interrogative ends up being no different from the declarative. Also, (5iii) results in the speaker bias in naki-Qs described above following neatly from the speaker-centric locus of evidence: the discourse participant who has the property of being the seat-of-knowledge by virtue of having evidence for Φ, expects Φ to be more likely to be true over ¬ Φ. Consequently, naki-Qs are always biased.

PREDICTIONS: The speaker-centric analysis of evidentials in interrogatives presented here has significant predictions in atleast two respects: (i) When the addressee has evidence for Φ too: naki-Qs would be felicitous even then, because they make no reference to the hearer's doxastic domain; (ii) In terms of answerhood properties: the addressee can legitimately answer with *naki*

or other elements signaling knowledge of Φ, which do not have to conform to the polarity of the bias expressed by the speaker. These predictions being borne out goes to show that *naki* is truly a new kind of evidential, forging a novel relationship between evidentiality, bias and questions.