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REGULATIONS ON USE

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Background

The field manuals were originally intended as working documents for internal use only. They were supplemented by verbal instructions and additional guidelines in many cases. If you have questions about using the materials, or comments on the viability in various field situations, feel free to get in touch with the authors.

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Recognitional deixis

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Space Project

Priority - Low. This is exploratory, but quite brief and simple to do. We are simply interested at this stage to see what range of responses we get.

Motivation - In order to achieve successful reference, speakers of all languages systematically rely on knowledge shared by interlocutors. The idea that ‘you know what I mean’ is often enshrined in dedicated morphological forms, or in specific uses of words such as demonstratives. These have been referred to as ‘recognitional’ (Sacks and Schegloff 1979, Himmelmann 1996, Enfield 2001). English has a large range of terms for use when you don’t know or can’t remember the word for something (*what-do-you-call-it*, *thingamijig*, *whatsit*, *doodad*, etc.) or someone’s name (*what’s-his-name*, *what’s-her-name*), or for when you want pointedly avoid saying something explicitly (*you-know -what*). These terms can differ subtly in terms of function, but have in common the fact that they can be used to successfully refer to things when the speaker knows that the interlocutor is likely to know or be able to easily work out what the speaker is talking about. When an English speaker uses *what-d’you-call-it*, this normally communicates that they don’t know or can’t remember the word for the thing they are referring to, while *you-know-what* communicates the idea that the speaker doesn’t want to say the word (see Enfield 2001 for detailed discussion). We are interested in the extent to which these kinds of expressions are grammaticalized across languages, just what kinds of meanings they have, what is their distribution, and to what extent these kinds of words or constructions are productive.

See the appendix for examples of some ‘recognitional’ expressions in Tiriyó and in Lao.

Task - Run the questionnaire with several speakers if possible. It is only brief and exploratory. It should take no more than half an hour for each speaker. Please complement the questionnaire with real observations of scenarios which are the same or similar to those in the questionnaire.

Questionnaire -

The suggested scenarios below are intended to give you ideas, and they will not be appropriate in every field situation - the motivations are spelt out in each case, and it will certainly be necessary to adjust the actual scenarios depending on the cultural situation in each field site. Use your imagination.

- i. *Spkr doesn’t know what X is called, and assumes that Addr doesn’t know either.*
Example: John goes to town and while he is there he finds a strange gadget which he brings back to the village. No-one has seen this object before. [The investigator might have an exemplar, such as an accu charger.] Bill examines it, but can’t work out what it is or how it is used. Later, Bill goes to see John and asks him *Can I have another look at _____?*
- ii. *Spkr doesn’t know what X is called, but assumes that Addr does (and it is clear in the context what Spkr must be referring to).*
Example: Mary is working with Jane on a certain kind of handicraft which requires special tools. Only practitioners of that handicraft know the names of these tools well, but most people have at least heard these words, and know what the various items are used for.

Mary is not a regular practitioner. She requires a certain tool which she can't see lying around, and she has forgotten the name of it. She asks Jane, *Can you pass me ____?* (It's clear to Jane by looking at Mary's work just what tool she requires right then.)

iii. *Spkr knows what X is called but knows that Addr doesn't*

Example: Try reversing the previous scenario - i.e. where Jane (the real practitioner) requires a tool which is in easier access to Mary (a non-practitioner who is assumed by Jane not to know the word for the referent), and Jane asks Mary *Can you pass me ____?*

iv. *Spkr knows what X is called, and knows that Addr also knows, BUT:*

- *Spkr doesn't want others present to know that s/he is talking about X.*

Example: John has come home from town, where he has bought some candy. He gives the candy to his wife Mary, and asks her to hide it so that their children won't find it. Later that day, while the children are around, John wants to ask Mary where she hid the candy, but doesn't want the children to understand what he is talking about. He asks her: *Where did you put ____?*

- *the word for X is taboo (in the context).*

John's mother comes to visit John and Mary, and she says a lot of bad things about John while she is there. Later, John wants to comment to Mary on how impolite her mother had been, but he does not want to offend her by explicitly criticizing her mother. He says *Your mother was quite ____ today.*

- *the word is long and clumsy and/or difficult to remember.*

Example: John is a foreign resident in The Netherlands, and it is time for him to renew his *vreemdelingendocument*. He says to Bill, *I have to go down to the police station to renew my ____.*

- *Spkr just can't think of it right then.*

Example: The handicraft-requiring-special-tools scenario, above, could be used here. Sue and Jane are both experts in a certain handicraft. Sue wants Jane to pass a certain tool, but has a mental block about the name of this tool. Sue says to Jane *Can you pass me ____?*

Once you have determined what kinds of expression get used in these contexts, try to determine whether there is some kind of system or set of dedicated expressions for such 'recognitional' meanings. This may involve specific lexical items (such as *thingamajig*), or morphologically transparent expressions (such as *whatsit*), special uses of existing morphology (such as recognitional use of demonstratives), or whole grammaticalized phrases (such as *what-d'you-call-it* and *you-know-what*). Explore the grammatical possibilities of these expressions. Expressions which are formally transparent (such as *what's-his-name*) are particularly interesting in terms of how they are grammatically incorporated into phrases and sentences. Thus, in English, the expression *what-d'you-call-it*, which is formally an interrogative sentence (disregarding its distinct intonational properties), can be used as a whole NP or NP head (*Where's the what-d'you-call-it (your mother gave me)?*), and as an attributive modifier (*He was a bit too what-do-you-call-it*). Recognitional uses of demonstratives are used as determiners (*They looked like those dunes you see along the coast near Leiden*), and in some cases are used as verbs and modifiers as well (as in Lao).

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Appendix

The following are descriptive notes on Tiriyo and Lao. For a more detailed discussion of the topic, with data from English and Lao, see Enfield 2001.

Tiriyo (these notes supplied by Sérgio Meira)

In Tiriyo (Cariban, Brazil), there are dedicated recognitional forms, as well as recognitional uses of demonstratives.

(a) 'Filler terms' (i = barred-i) (cf. English *what-do-you-call-it*)

ati-na (inanimate) 'what-do-you-call-this-thing'
naa-na (animate) 'what-do-you-call-this-person'
aja-na (locative) 'what-do-you-call-the-place-it-was-at / it-goes-to'

/ati/ is the normal inanimate interrogative ('what?'), /aja/ a 'general locative/directional' interrogative ('where/whither'), /-na/ looks like the third-person copula /nai/ (one way of saying 'what is this?' would be /ati nai serë/)-- there is some reason to think that it reflects an 'older copula' /na/. (Many Caribbean languages have two, some even three, third-person copular forms that convey evidential information; 'the book is in the box' would then have different copulas according to whether you saw it there, or just suppose it must be there. My guess is that this /-na/ suffix is a remnant of the 'uncertainty, I guess it is' copula.) The animate form /naa-na/ is a bit surprising, since the corresponding animate interrogative is /aki/ 'who'; */akī-na/ is unattested. It may be that the initial /naa/ is an old deictic element (cf. /naapohpa/ 'that's it! you're right! your suggestion is good!', a particle), but I don't know.

(b) 'Conspiracy terms' (cf. English *you-know-what*)

I have observed the Tiriyo expression for 'you know', /ëwaarë/ (ë = schwa) (actually a postposition with a second-person /ë-/ prefix: 'known-to-you'), used in similar 'avoidance' contexts as English. It can be nominalized (/ëwaarë-to/ 'that which you know'). This nominalized form occurred once when a mother wanted to tell a father that she had bought some candy for their children; since the child in question was around, she didn't want to say /suuman/ 'candy', she used just /ëwaarëto/ 'that which you know'.

Demonstrative use: the anaphoric forms (/irë/ inanimate, /nërë/ 'animate') can be used to refer to implicitly known things ('that thing', 'this guy'), and I have occasionally observed it being used to refer to someone who was present and who wasn't supposed to understand that he was being talked about. For example, in one case, a young man had attacked and almost killed another man, and was going to be tried and punished - a woman wanted to manifest her approval of his

punishment, but the young man in question was present, so she referred to him with the anaphoric animate /nĕrĕ/ 'that one' from the beginning and uttered a couple of sentences about him without ever mentioning who /nĕrĕ/ was, and yet it was understood by everybody understood that he was the one being referred to.

Lao

Lao speakers make conventional use of the phrase *qan⁰-nan⁴* 'that thing' (made up of the distal demonstrative *nan⁴* 'that' in combination with the all-purpose classifier *qan⁰* 'thing, one') as a recognitional, signalling that the speaker doesn't know how to put into words what they are trying to say. It is used in this sense not to refer to things but predications. It is often used as a kind of all-purpose euphemism when the speaker feels that they can't find an appropriate way to say what they have in mind (e.g. because what they have in mind is sensitive politically or emotionally, in the context; cf. Enfield 2001 for a description). It is more general than English *what-do-you-call-it* and *you-know-what*, and would be the obvious choice in most of the scenarios outlined in the questionnaire above. Grammatically, the recognitional uses are distinct in being usable as verbs and modifiers, and also in not requiring that the referent be previously mentioned or otherwise contextually available.