How to mark the truth: a cross-linguistic approach to verum

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This workshop focuses on the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of truth-marking. The names that have been used to refer to the the phenomena related to the issue include, among others, 'counter-assertive focus' (Watters 1979), 'polar(ity) focus' (Dik and Van der Hulst 1981), 'verum focus' (Höhle 1992), 'emphatic polarity' (Villa García and González Rodríguez 2021) or simply 'verum' (Gutzmann and Castroviejo Miró 2011), which we adopt in this call. This terminological variety is suggestive of the vast amount of ideas and conceptions characteristic for this field of research. This workshop wants to uncover the core of the issue and find out what verum truly constitutes. We want to expand the empirical base and determine the common and diverging properties of truth-marking in the languages of the world. The workshop's objective is to set a theoretical and empirical baseline for future research on verum and related phenomena.

As a starting point we use the definition proposed by Höhle (1992) who describes verum as *emphasizing the expression of truth of a proposition.* To identify verum we rely on the lists of contexts in which it is allowed and disallowed presented by Matthewson & Gougie (2018), building on Zimmermann & Hole (2008).

Allowed contexts

> Correcting a previous utterance, corrections of negative expectations, emphatic agreement, confirmation of expected path of events, answers to questions (with emphatic effect), answers to indirect questions, in the antecedent of conditionals ('stressing the conditionality'), inside yes-no questions (with an 'Is it really?' effect)

Disallowed contexts

> Discourse-initially, neutral answers to questions

One aim of this workshop is to test how universally these lists apply and what conclusion we can draw for our understanding of verum and for its theoretical modeling. Furthermore, we aim to get a more complete overview of the strategies different languages use to express verum.

Non-European languages for which the expression of verum has been described, in greater or lesser detail, include Vietnamese (Austroasiatic; Tran 2016), Aghem (Niger-Congo; Watters 1979), Gur languages (Niger-Congo; Schwarz 2010), Bambara (Niger-Congo; Prokhorov 2014), Wolof (Niger-Congo; Jordanoska 2020), Bura (Afro-Asiatic; Gutzmann et al. 2020), Upper Napo Kichwa (Quechuan; Grzech 2020), Gitksan (Tsimshianic; Matthewson 2021) and Kwak'wala (Wakashan; Littell 2016). These languages employ different strategies. Moreover, even within

one language, there doesn't seem to always be a single linguistic element dedicated to verum marking. Jordanoska (2020) showed that in Wolof there are four different particles that can occur in verum contexts: *de*, *kat*, *kay* and *gaa*. Their distribution is based on the polarity of the antecedent. Furthermore, they can only occur in declarative clauses. Due to these distributional facts, Jordanoska (2020) analyzed these particles as hybrids between verum markers and response particles, meaning that Wolof does not have a single lexical exponent of the verum operator.

There is a vast amount of theoretical work on verum. Gutzmann (2012) systematized these approaches to truth-marking by distinguishing Lexical Operator Theses (LOT) from Focal Accent Theses (FAT). FATs (such as Höhle 1992) posit that every sentence has a verum operator that is subject to the focal marking rules of the language in question. In a verum context the verum operator gets focused. LOTs (such as Romero and Han 2004) posit that verum is a lexical operator independent of focus and is only present in a sentence when it is overtly realized. According to Romero and Han's (2004) LOT approach, verum in English can be realized by *do*-insertion, outer negation questions and the adverb *really*, although it has later been disputed whether the latter two are really instances of verum (see for example Goodhue 2018 and references therein). Gutzmann et al. (2020), studying a sample of African and indigenous American languages using morphological marking, found that there is no systematic overlap between the strategies employed for the marking of focus and the marking of verum in these languages. Furthermore, they showed that even in languages in which double focus constructions are ungrammatical, focus and verum marking can co-occur provided that the context is right. They take this as evidence for the LOTs, rather than the FATs.

A lot of theoretical work on verum has been strongly informed by Germanic data. In this language family, verum is expressed predominantly through stress on a finite verb. This empirical fact has been used to suggest a link between sentence mood and verum (cf. for instance Höhle 1992, Lohnstein 2016). Kocher (2019, forthcoming) showed that also some Romance varieties, even though they use a particle strategy to express verum, can be analyzed in much the same way as Lohnstein (2016) proposes for German.

What this overview shows is that there is substantial variation cross-linguistically in how verum is marked and which contexts fall under this marking. Furthermore, how to tackle this variation within a theoretical model, is still up for debate. All these open issues motivate this workshop that is set out to address what verum constitutes, what strategies are used to express it and how verum relates to sentence mood, focus, epistemic and evidential modality and other types of meaning. Finally, we are also interested in the development of empirical methods that help identify verum meaning in larger data sets or test hypotheses with respect to verum meaning in experimental settings.

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