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What is egophoricity in Tibetic, and beyond?

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The concept of ‘egophoricity’ was originally proposed by Tournadre (1992) to account for the behaviour of a number of grammatical markers occurring in Standard Tibetan. These morphemes (existential verbs, copulas, auxiliaries, and verbal suffixes) seem to indicate that what the speaker is expressing is based on his/her “personal or privileged knowledge or involvement” (San Roque et al. 2018: 2). This notion was then applied to describe the grammars of Tibetic languages in general, such as Amdo Tibetan (Simon 2021), Rgyalthang Tibetan (Hongladarom 2007), Kürtop (Hyslop 2018), Ladakhi (Zeisler 2011), Purik (Zemp 2017) *inter alia*.

Egophoric markers are assumed to have a number of special features. Among the most important ones, they are strongly tied with the speaker’s reporting on his / her own past volitional action, and are sensitive to person marking and clause type, typically occurring with 1st person subjects in statements and 2nd person subjects in interrogatives (due to the ‘anticipation rule’; Hale 1980, Tournadre 2001), rarely occurring with 3rd person subjects except in reported speech, and not occurring in imperatives or embedded clauses (San Roque et al. 2018).

In the meantime, the concept has been adopted to account for grammatical markers in a wide range of typologically very divergent languages, including non-Tibetic languages within the Tibetosphere (Simon 2018, Gawne 2017, Jacques 2019), North-East Caucasian languages (Creissels 2008), Barbacoan languages (Curnow 2002), and even some languages in New Guinea (San Roque & Loughnane 2012).

However, more and more questions are being raised regarding this category. Numerous exceptions to the features associated with it have been noted, both in the Tibetic languages and cross-linguistically. Especially the extension to non-Tibetic languages has blurred the picture considerably. The notion of volitionality, for example, concerns only some of the morphemes that are labelled ‘egophoric’, thus questioning its relevance as a central component of the definition of ‘egophoricity’. Moreover, the status of at least some of the features that seem to distinguish egophoricity from other grammatical notions has been questioned. For instance, it has been pointed out that the ‘anticipation rule’ is not typical of the category, as it applies to a wide range of semantic dimensions, such as the evidential ones (Tournadre 2008). Related to this, on a more ‘theoretical’ plane, it remains to be clarified how egophoricity relates to semantic dimensions such as evidentiality, mirativity, and subjectivity.

This workshop aims to get a better grip on the concept of egophoricity. The main issue to be addressed is what the notion actually involves, semantically, also relative to the notions of evidentiality, mirativity and subjectivity, and whether / how the properties ascribed to it can be related to its semantic status. The primary focus will be on the languages for which it was originally postulated, viz. the Tibetic ones, and concern with the phenomenon in other languages will be in comparison with the situation of the egophoric markers in Tibetic. The main reason for focusing on Tibetic is that already within this language family, and even within

individual Tibetic languages, there is considerable diversity in the behaviour of egophoric morphemes. Clarifying what is meant by egophoricity in the languages for which the notion was first proposed seems to be a priority, and an indispensable first step before investigating whether the notion is relevant and necessary to describe the grammars of other language families.

Specific questions addressed by the workshop include:

- How to define egophoricity?

What are the necessary and sufficient components that should be included in an operational definition of egophoricity? Should the notion be given a semantically consistent definition (such as 'time' or 'aspect')? Or is 'egophoric' a simple label given to a set of inflections identifiable in a specific language family and only useful in that grammatical tradition (comparable to the label 'subjunctive')?

- How does egophoricity relate with evidentiality?

Egophoric markers usually alternate with evidential ones (experiential, inferential, ...). What does that imply regarding the relationship between the two semantic categories? Is egophoricity a type of evidentiality (as argued by many Tibetanists), or are both notions clearly distinct (as argued by some typologists)?

- Does egophoricity relate with mirativity? If so, how?

It is sometimes suggested that egophoricity is more or less the opposite of mirativity: while the latter marks unexpected / surprising new information, the former marks known and established knowledge. To what extent is this adequate? If factual markers also encode assimilated information, and are thus, by definition, non-mirative, how are they different from egophorics?

- Is egophoricity related with subjectivity? If so, how?

There are different notions of subjectivity in the literature (e.g., in the context of analyses of some modal notions), typically aiming to refer to the marking of the speaker's personal position / opinion. Is this concept the same as egophoricity? Is subjectivity the key difference distinguishing egophoric and factual markers?

- How does egophoric marking differ between Tibetic languages, and what does this imply?

It is known that the properties and use of egophoric markers differ from one Tibetic language to another. How? And what does it mean for the definition of the notion? Is it relevant to keep one label and propose a slightly different definition for each language being described? What do all the egophoric markers of all the Tibetic languages have in common? Should certain forms that have been labelled 'egophoric' in some Tibetic languages be renamed?

- Is egophoricity as postulated for Tibetic vs for other languages really the same concept?

Egophoricity is assumed to be cross-linguistically relevant. To what extent do presumed egophoric markers in other languages differ from or share properties with those in Tibetic? What does this mean for the definition of the concept of egophoricity?

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