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Child Acquisition of the Quechua Affirmative Suffix

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Introduction

Quechua, the dominant language of the Inca empire, is today spoken in several distinct varieties by over eight million people in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, and Colombia (Cerrón-Palomino, 1987). The language is agglutinative, with morphologically complex words assembled entirely through suffixation. Although the canonical word order is Subject-Object-Verb, the language allows great flexibility in the ordering of matrix constituents. Quechua speakers, even small children, produce all six possible word orders, although post-verbal subjects are rare in adult speech.¹

Quechua also exhibits an array of suffixes which indicate both the epistemic status and the primary focus of sentences. This study considers the Affirmative suffix, *-mi/-n*, which fulfills three functions in Quechua discourse. First, it marks a constituent as the primary focus of the sentence. Second, the suffix serves an evidential function: it indicates the speaker's information source as direct, attested, first-hand evidence. Finally, it performs a validation function: *-mi/-n* marks assertions and indicates conviction, whether or not the corresponding evidence is first-hand.²

Given these diverse functions, the present study explores the acquisition of the Affirmative suffix by young children learning Quechua as their first language. Previous studies in the acquisition of languages such as English and French (e.g. Moore & Davidge, 1989; Hickman, Champaud & Bassano, 1993) suggest that appropriate use of the devices for expressing epistemic modality develops gradually. An analysis of the spontaneous speech of four children undertaken by Bloom, Rispoli, Gartner & Hafitz (1989) revealed appropriate use of the cognitive verbs *think* and *know* for expressing degrees of certainty by the age of 3;0. By contrast, Moore & Davidge discovered empirically that children do not fully understand the uses of the verbs *know*, *be sure*, and *think* for expressing degrees of certainty until the age of 4;0 or 5;0. In a study of the acquisition of Turkish evidentials, Aksu-Koç (1988) found that four-year-olds could distinguish witness and nonwitness perspectives; however, it was not until the age of seven that children sorted out the rules governing the use of the evidentials marking direct and indirect evidence.

In light of findings such as these, I consider two questions. How and when do children first make use of the Quechua Affirmative suffix? Are there other strategies available to children for expressing assertions and emphasizing sentence elements before they have begun making use of the Affirmative suffix?

Functions of Affirmative *-mi/-n*

The Focusing Function

As observed by Muysken (1995 and elsewhere), the evidential suffix marks a constituent as the primary focus of the sentence, unless the constituent occurs sentence-initially or immediately following the topic(s). Quechua scholars (notably, Muysken, Weber, 1986; and Nuckolls, 1993) concur that the sentence element marked by the evidential suffix as the primary focus usually constitutes rhematic material, or "new" information. Since constituents occurring in sentence-initial position are generally considered to convey thematic or "given" information, it is not surprising that the evidential-bearing constituent in a Quechua proposition is rarely focused when it occurs as the first element in the utterance.

Two of these suffixes are shown in (1-3), with approximate English glosses indicating the sentence focus. In each example, the focused constituent is the direct object misk'i-ta 'sweets'.³

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------|
| 1. | Juan misk'ita- n munan.
Juan sweets-Acc-AF want-3 subj
'It is SWEETS that Juan wants.' | Assertion |
| 2. | Juan misk'ita- s munan.
Juan sweets-Acc-RE want-3 subj
'It is reportedly SWEETS that Juan wants.' | Report ("Hearsay") |
| 3. | Juan misk'ita- cha munan.
Juan sweets-Acc-DU want-3 subj
'It must be SWEETS that Juan wants.' | Conjecture |

In (1), this element is focused in an assertion through attachment of the Affirmative suffix. In (2), the Reportative suffix occurs on the focused element in a so-called "Hearsay" statement. Finally, in (3), it is the Dubitative suffix that appears on the focused element, since the sentence expresses a conjecture.

The Epistemic Functions

The conjectural function of Dubitative -cha is not disputed: it occurs in propositions which are inferential. By contrast, there is some controversy regarding the epistemic functions of the Affirmative suffix. Muysken and Weber, among others, propose that the suffixes are mainly evidential (and not validational). On their view, the suffixes indicate the speaker's source of information: direct, attested, first-hand evidence as contrasted with indirect, second-hand evidence such as hearsay.

However, Nuckolls and Floyd (1997) claim a validational function. Nuckolls notes that speakers of Pastaza Quechua, at least, make use of the Affirmative suffix to mark constituents in utterances concerning future happenings, events which they could not possibly have directly attested or experienced. The author presents compelling evidence that the most prominent function of the Affirmative suffix is *asserting*, that is, expressing personal conviction or belief rather than direct experience.

One example of the asserting function is the means available to Quechua speakers for responding affirmatively to direct questions. In (4), I present an adult-like reply to the question, Pukllashan-chu 'Is he playing?'. In the affirmative reply, the respondent repeats the questioned constituent, replacing Interrogative -chu with the Affirmative suffix.

- | | |
|----|---|
| 4. | Direct Question: Puklla - sha - n - chu ?
Play Prog 3 subj Interr
'Is he playing?' |
|----|---|

Affirmative Reply: (Ari), puklla - sha - n - mi.
 Yes play Prog 3 subj AF
 '(Yes), he is playing.'

The evidential and validational functions are closely related. I assume, in the present study, that children acquiring Quechua as their first language must learn three functions for Affirmative *-mi/-n*: (1) morphosyntactic focus; (2) evidentiality; and (3) assertion.

The Data

The present analysis concentrates on the naturalistic speech of three children, ages 2;5 to 3;2. The children, two girls and a boy, were recorded in their home community of Chalhuanca, a village located in the Caylloma Province of Arequipa in southern Peru. Two of the children, Hilda and Juan, were each recorded for an approximate total of five to six hours over a four-month period, while the third child, Ana, was recorded for eleven hours over a period of six months. The audiotapes were transcribed by native speakers of the Cuzco-Collao variety of Quechua. Table 1 summarizes information on the ages at which each child was recorded, in years and months. For the purpose of analysis, the corpus of utterances produced by Ana was divided into three groups according to age.

Table 1: *Quechua-learning children by age at recording*

Ana	2;5 2;6	2;7 2;8	2;9 2;10		
Hilda			2;10	2;11 3;0	3;1
Juan					3;0 3;2

Ana In the first age range, 2;5 to 2;6, Ana's utterances lacked independent suffixes altogether. In (5-8), for example, we find Ana producing utterances without the Affirmative suffix or topic marker *-qa*. In such expressions, with copula ellipsis, these suffixes are required in adult speech. The appropriate forms are shown in parentheses after each of Ana's utterances.

5. Wasi - pi usitu. (Wasi - pi - n / Wasi - pi - qa)
 House Loc bear
 'The bear is in the house.'
6. Chay uvija. (Chay - mi / Chay - qa)
 That sheep
 'That's a sheep.'

7. Usu pay. (Pay - **mi** usu)
 Bear 3 pron
 'He's a bear.'
8. Vaca Yoni - _____. (Vaca - **n** / Vaca - **qa**)
 Cow Yoni (Gen)
 'The cow is Yoni's.'

In (9-11), I present three of Ana's affirmative replies to direct questions. In these examples and in those that follow, the abbreviation "IL" indicates the interlocutor. Typically, during this first age range, Ana responded by producing utterances with first-person pronoun subjects in post-verbal position, instead of the Affirmative suffix.

9. IL: Apa-nki?
 Take-2 subj
 'Will you take it?'
- Ana: Apa-n_ **noqa**. Appropriate: (Arí,) apa-saq-**mi**.
 Take-3 subj 1 pron (Yes) take-1 fut-AF
 'I take it.' 'Yes, I will.'
10. IL: Puklla-q-**chu** puri-nki?
 Play-Agt-Interr go-2 subj
 'Will you go to play?'
- Ana: Puklla_ **noqa**. Appropriate: (Arí,) puklla-q-**mi**.
 Play-(1 subj) 1 pron (Yes) play-Agt-AF
 'I play.' 'Yes, to play.'
11. IL: Wayk'u-ru-nki-ña-**chu**?
 Cook-Exh-2 subj-Disc-Interr
 'Have you already cooked?'
- Ana: Wayk'u-sha-__ **noqa**. Appropriate: (Arí,) wayk'u-ru-ni-**n**.
 Cook-Prog-(1subj) 1 pron (Yes), cook-Exh-1subj-AF
 'I am cooking.' 'Yes, I have.'

This is a curious strategy because adults seldom produce explicit pronoun arguments, and they rarely produce utterances with extraposed subjects. In fact, according to Wölck (1987), the infrequent extraposition of the subject in a Quechua sentence occurs only when the subject is very insignificant.

Quite remarkably, during the next age range, 2;7 to 2;8, when Ana began producing the Affirmative suffix, the post-verbal pronoun strategy virtually disappeared from Ana's affirmative replies and assertions. The change observed is striking: the emergence of the Affirmative suffix in fourteen of the twenty-three responses to direct questions coincided with a marked decline in subject-final replies. Examples (12-14) are typical affirmative responses to direct questions in this age range, each exhibiting the Affirmative suffix. The utterance in (14) is an assertion produced by Ana in response to a WH-question. The responses in (13-14) reveal confusion regarding the appropriate allomorph, -mi following consonants and -n after vowels.

12. IL: Ati-ku-sha-n-chu?
Can-Refl-Prog-3 subj-Interr
'Can it be done?'
- Ana: Ati-ku-sha-n-**mi**, ati-ku-n-**mi**, ati-ku-n.
Can-Refl-Prog-3-AF, can-Refl-3-AF, can-Refl-3
'(Yes), it can be done, it can be done.'
13. IL: Qhelli-chu wawa ka-sha-n?
Dirty-Interr baby be-Prog-3 subj
'Is the baby dirty?'
- Ana: *Qhelli-**mi**. (Qhelli-**n**)
Dirty-AF
'(Yes), dirty.'
14. IL: Pi-taq kay chukcha-ta ñaqch'a-ra-sunki?
Who-Cont this hair-Acc comb-Past-3subj>2obj
'And who combed your hair?'
- Ana: *Mama-yki-**n-mi**. (Mama-yki-**n**)
Mom-2 poss-AF-AF
'Your mom.'

Table 2 presents a summary of Ana's affirmative answers during the first two age ranges. In the first, 2;5 to 2;6, Ana produced no instances of the Affirmative suffix, while nine, or 50%, of her replies showed the post-verbal pronoun subject strategy. In the next age range, 2;7 to 2;8, there are only two such replies (9%), with fourteen responses--nearly two thirds--exhibiting the Affirmative suffix. Another five of the twenty-three replies contained only verbs. This was appropriate insofar as the focused constituents in the questions preceding these five replies were also verbs; nevertheless, these answers lacked the Affirmative suffix.

Table 2: Ana's affirmative answers to direct questions in two age ranges

Age Range ==>	2;5 - 2;6		2;7 - 2;8	
Answer Type*	#	EXAMPLE	#	EXAMPLE
(C)-V-S	9	IL: Atinki, riki. 'You can.' Ana: Atin_ noqa. 'I can.'	2	IL: Mikhunata wayk'uranki-chu? 'Did you cook food?' Ana: Mikhunata wayk'usa_ noqa. 'I'll cook food.'
(S) and/or (C)	3	IL: Purinki-chu? 'Will you walk?' Ana: Noqa. 'I.'	2	IL: Aqha-chu chaypi? 'Is the chicha there?' Ana: Ankay-___ aqha. 'The chicha's over there.'
Verb only	2	IL: Ña-chu chayasqa? 'Is it already cooked?' Ana: *Chayaskushan. '?It is cooking.'	5	IL: Purinki-chu? 'Will you walk?' Ana: Purisaq. 'I'll walk.'
(S), V, C	4	IL: Manchakunki-chu? 'Are you afraid?' Ana: Noqa machakusa_ kukulu__. 'I'm afraid of the kuku.'	--	
Affirmative evidential on questioned constituent.	---		14	IL: Atikushan-chu? 'Can it be done?' Ana: Atikushan- mi , atikun- mi ... 'Yes, it can be done.'
TOTAL:	18		23	

* S = Subject; V = Verb; C = Complement

During the third age range, 2;9 to 2;10, Ana produces no verb-subject responses at all. A further development in this age range is the first appearance of Affirmative-marked utterances which are not responses to direct questions. In these utterances, as shown in (15-16), the word-initial constituent invariably bears the Affirmative suffix; no elements are focused. By the age of 2;10, then, Ana has acquired productive use of the Affirmative suffix for affirmative replies to direct questions and for expressing assertion or conviction--the validational function.

15. *Mikhu-ni - **mi** pampa-lla-pi (Mikhu-ni-n)
Eat 1 subj AF floor Delim Loc
'I eat just on the floor.'

16. Hap'i-sha-ni- n qan-paq-ta, mana Lubisa-__-ta-qa.
Hold Prog 1 subj AF 2 pron Ben Acc Neg Lubisa (Ben)Acc Top

'I'm holding the one for you (yours), not the one for Lubisa (Lubisa's).'

Reduplication At this point, I should mention that adult speakers of Quechua have other means of emphasizing sentence elements. Besides the morphosyntactic focus provided by the Affirmative suffix, Quechua speakers appear to rely on the reduplication of constituents. The duplicated constituents, including subjects, objects, adjuncts, and verbs, typically occur utterance-initially and -finally; that is, speakers appear to emphasize a sentence-initial element by repeating it at the very end. Examples of this strategy, both produced by Chalhucan adults, are presented in (17-18).

17. Uña-ta lliq chichi-rqu-nqa uña-ta. [Object]
Lamb-Acc all hail-Exh-3 fut lamb-Acc
'It will hail on all the lambs.'
18. Chay huq gringa-chu chay huq? [Subject]
That one gringa-Interr that one
'Is that one another gringa?'

Although Ana does not yet focus sentence constituents morphologically by means of the Affirmative suffix, utterances from the earliest period reveal that the reduplication strategy is available to Ana for emphasizing different sentence elements. The examples in (19-22) were all produced during the first age range, 2;5 to 2;6. In fact, all the children made use of the reduplicating strategy for emphasizing sentence constituents.

19. Sara-ta mama-y apa-ku-sha-n sara-ta. [Direct Object]
Corn-Acc mom-1 poss take-Refl-Prog-3 subj corn-Acc
'My mom is taking the corn.'
20. Wawa-ta puri-sha-ni wawa-ta. [Directional Complement]
Baby-Acc walk-Prog-1 subj baby-Acc
'I'm walking to the baby.'
21. Pasa-n calli-pi pasa-n. [Verb]
Go-3 subj street-Loc go-3 subj
'He goes in the street.'
22. Noqa wasi-ta puri-yku-sa_ noqa. [Subject]
I pron house-Acc walk-Aug-1 fut I pron
'I will walk to the house.'

Hilda The following set of utterances (23-26) was produced by the next child, Hilda, ages 2;10 to 3;1. In contrast to Ana, Hilda is beginning to make use of the Affirmative suffix as a focus-marker. As shown in (25-26), Hilda produces assertions with and without focusing. In (26), for example, it is the verb go- 'give' that bears the primary focus of the sentence. Like Ana, Hilda occasionally appends the wrong allomorph to words ending in vowels, even at age 3;1. This is shown in (24).

23. IL: Gusta-sunki-chu?
Like 3 subj->2 obj Interr
'Do you like it?'
- Hilda [2;11]: Gusta-sha-wa-n- **mi**.
Like Prog 1 obj 3 subj AF
'Yes, I like it.'
24. IL: Mana-chu kunan señorita-yki suya-sunki?
Neg Interr now señorita 2 poss wait 3 subj ->2 obj
'Won't your señorita wait for you now?'
- Hilda [3;1]: *Suya-wa-n-ku- **mi**. (Suya-wa-n-ku- n)
Wait 1 obj 3 subj pl AF
'Yes, they'll wait for me.'
25. Qhepa-pi- n runa puri-nqa.
Back Loc AF man walk 3 fut
'The man will walk later (?).'
26. Platu-ta noqa-man qo-wa-rqa-n- **mi**.
Plate Acc 1 pron Dat give 1 obj Past 3 subj AF
'She gave the plate to me.'

Juan We now turn to the oldest child, Juan, ages 3;0 to 3;2. The data I will present are taken from conversations between Juan and family members. The conversations centered on family photographs, with different members of the family quizzing Juan about their contents. In this conversational context, Juan used the Dubitative suffix, -cha, in conjectures or expressions of uncertainty. Examples (27-29) show the use of this suffix, with and without focusing. In each example, Juan speculates about aspects of the photographs that he cannot actually see or discern.

27. IL: Ima-ni-n doctor?
What-say-3 subj doctor
'What does the doctor say?'

- Juan: Mana- **cha** kusi-ku-n-chu.
Neg-DU (be)happy-Refl-3 subj-Interr
'Maybe he isn't happy.'
28. IL: Ima chay?
What that
'What's that?'
- Juan: Ima- **cha** chay-qa?
What-DU that-Top
'What could that be?'
29. IL: Ima-ta ruwa-sha-n?
What-Acc do-Prog-3 subj
'What is he doing?'
- Juan: Ima-ta-pis ruwa-n-chu qaq-pata-pi- **cha**?
Something-Acc do-3 subj-Interr cliff-top-Loc-DU
'Could he be doing something on top of the cliff?'

I present these examples as a contrast to Juan's use of the Affirmative suffix during the same conversations. Juan uses the Affirmative suffix in convictions based on direct photographic evidence: he uses the suffix to make assertions about clearly revealed aspects of the photographs that he can actually see for himself. This is the evidential function of the Affirmative suffix. Sample utterances, with and without focusing, are provided in (30-32).

30. IL: Chay-pi ima-taq ka-sha-n?
That-Loc what-Cont be-Prog-3 subj
'And what is over there?'
- Juan: Qan-ta- **n** q'epi-sha-sunki.
2 pron-Acc-AF carry-Prog-3 subj>2 obj
'Someone is carrying you.'
31. IL: Pi-taq pay?
Who-Cont 3 pron
'And who is he?'
- Juan: Chay-qa noqa- **n** ka-sha-ni.
That-Top 1st pron-AF be-Prog-1 subj
'That's ME!'

32. IL: Pay-ri?
3 pron-Resp
'And he?'
- Juan: Tiyu-y sapallan-**mi** ka-sha-n.
Uncle-1 poss alone-AF be-Prog-3 subj
'My uncle is ALONE.'

Concluding remarks

In concluding this brief discussion, I must acknowledge the fact that the functions of the Quechua Affirmative suffix--asserting, focusing, and claiming direct evidence--are intertwined. I realize that they are difficult to tease apart. Nevertheless, my data suggest that children acquire the functions of this suffix gradually, in a piecemeal, additive fashion. In fact, my study, though preliminary, suggests the following acquisitional sequence:

- I. Absence of independent suffixes; non-adult affirmative responses to direct questions, such as post-verbal pronoun subjects; emphasis only through reduplication
- II. Affirmative responses with **-mi/-n**; emphasis only through reduplication
- III. Affirmative responses with **-mi/-n** + Assertions (*validation function*) without focusing; emphasis only through reduplication
- IV. Affirmative responses with **-mi/-n** + Assertions with/without *focusing*
- V. Affirmative responses with **-mi/-n** + Assertions with/without focusing + Direct Evidence (*evidential function*)

Before the emergence of any independent suffixes, children may well make use of non-adult strategies in their affirmative responses to direct questions, e.g., producing post-verbal pronoun subjects. We have also seen that an early acquisition for emphasizing sentence constituents is the reduplication strategy also available to adult speakers. The first use of the Affirmative suffix occurs in affirmative replies, the most basic asserting function, followed by assertions which are not affirmative responses to direct questions. Thereafter, children begin focusing non-initial sentence constituents by means of the Affirmative suffix. At the end of this learning process, children have figured out the evidential function of the Affirmative suffix: used contrastively with other evidential suffixes, it enables the Quechua speaker to express assertions based on direct or attested evidence.

Notes

¹ Appreciation is extended to the Spencer Foundation and to Paul Bloom, recipient of the grant, for funding of the 1996 fieldwork undertaken for this study.

² The reader is referred to Willett (1988) for an interesting discussion of evidentiality across languages.

³ Abbreviations used in interlinear glosses are presented in the Appendix.

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Appendix

Terms for abbreviations used in interlinear glosses

Independent suffixes	AF - Affirmative	/-mi/ or /-n/
	RE - Report	/-s/
	DU - Dubitative	/-cha/
	Interr - Interrogative	/-chu/
	Top - Topic	/-qa/
	Cont - Contrastive	/-taq/
	Resp - Responsive	/-ri/

	Delim - Delimitative	/-lla-/
	Disc - Discontinuous	/-ña/
Nominal Suffixes	Poss - Person-of-possessor	1st: /-y/, 2nd: /-yki/, 3rd: /-n/
	Acc - Accusative	/-ta/
	Dat - Dative	/-man/
	Ben - Benefactive	/-paq/
	Loc - Locative	/-pi/
	Gen - Genitive	/-q/, /-pa/
Verbal Suffixes	Subj - Person-of-subject	1st: /-ni/, 2nd: /-nki/, 3rd: /-n/
	Obj - Person-of-object	1st: /-wa-/, 3rd>2nd: /-sunki/
	Agt - Agentive	/-q/
	Fut - Future	1st: /-saq/, 3rd: /-nqa/
	Past	/-r(q)a-/
	Refl - Reflexive	/-ku-/
	Prog - Progressive	/-sha-/
	Exh - Exhortative	/-r(q)u-/
	Aug - Augmentative	/-y(k)u-/
Pronouns	noqa	first person singular
	qan	second person singular
	pay	third person singular
	pi	interrogative: who?
	pi-pis	indefinite: someone
Negation	Neg - Negative	mana