

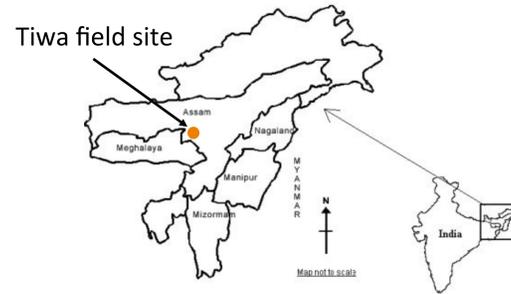
# Implicating ignorance: Epistemic indefinites in Tiwa

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## Overview

Tiwa (Tibeto-Burman; India) has two series of epistemic indefinites (EIs): one whose epistemic effects arise via an anti-singleton constraint (similar to Spanish *algún*) and another, wide-scope indefinite, whose epistemic effects must be derived differently. I propose that for these indefinites ignorance arises not through domain constraints, but through competition with the definite and other indefinites, showing that similar inferences can arise through different sorts of competition.



## Pragmatic competition

By using a *-khi* indefinite, the speaker explicitly quantifies over choice functions: that is, she quantifies over different ways in which an individual can be selected from a set

- Quantifying over CFs, rather than using either the definite or plain indefinite alternatives, highlights the different ways in which individuals can be selected from a set

### Reasoning:

- The speaker cannot or did not use a definite, or other referring expression (such as a name)
- Instead, she is quantifying: implying ignorance about the witness
- She could have quantified directly over individuals with the plain indefinite, to result in the same truth conditions
- Instead, she quantified over CFs: she is ignorant about the choice functional witness
- Inference: She doesn't know how to pick the witness out

- (9) Ang **shar-khí** **India-ne** **PM-go** lak mán-a lí-do.  
1SG who-KHI India-GEN PM-ACC meet-INF go-IPFV  
'I'm going to meet some Indian Prime Minister.'  
✓: The speaker hasn't met him before. [2016.2.80]

The individual witness might be clear, but using *-khi* indicates the speaker does not know how to pick that individual out

## Relatedly: anti-uniqueness

Notably, English-like anti-uniqueness effects arising with indefinites from Maximise Presupposition are absent in Tiwa

- (10) Ang **sája** **India-ne** **PM-go** lak mán-a lí-do.  
1SG one India-GEN PM-ACC meet-INF go-IPFV  
'I'm going to meet an Indian Prime Minister.' [2017.1.29]

Plausibly, this absence is due to the availability of *-pha* indefinites, which impose an anti-uniqueness constraint, as well as definites

- (11) # Ang **shar-pha** **India-ne** **PM-go** lak mán-a lí-do.  
1SG who-PHA India-GEN PM-ACC meet-INF go-IPFV  
'I'm going to meet an Indian Prime Minister.' [2016.2.101]

## Typological implications

If the epistemic effects of *-khi* indefinites arise from general Gricean reasoning, the effects should be present in any language that has distinct choice functional indefinites and existential quantification over individuals, and absent in languages that do not (e.g., St'át'imcets (Matthewson 1999))

## Indefinites and ignorance

Indefinites can give rise to ignorance implicatures

- Examples: Spanish *algún* and German *irgendein*
- Existing Gricean pragmatic accounts (Kratzer & Shimoyama 2002; Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2010) derive the epistemic effects as a quantity implicature that arises from the constraints that the EIs impose on their domain: e.g., they cannot range over a singleton
- In using a non-singleton EI rather than a singleton alternative, the speaker makes a weaker assertion in non-DE contexts
- Listeners assume the speaker is avoiding a false exhaustivity inference, indicating the speaker does not know any of the alternatives are false

## Two epistemic indefinites in Tiwa

Tiwa has two EI series, the *-pha* series and the *-khi* series, which contrast with plain indefinite *sája* 'one': neither can be felicitously followed by an identification of the witness ((1) & (2) vs. (3))

- (1) **Shar-khí** phi-dom. # Pe-do Mukton. [2017.1.81]  
who-KHI come-PST 3SG-TOP Mukton  
'Someone came. # Namely Mukton.'
- (2) **Shar-pha** phi-dom. # Pe-do Mukton. [2017.1.81]  
who-PHA come-PST 3SG-TOP Mukton  
'Someone came. # Namely Mukton.'
- (3) **Sája libíng** phi-dom. Pe-do Mukton. [2017.1.81]  
one person come-PST 3SG-TOP Mukton  
'A person came. Namely Mukton.'

## Speaker ignorance is implicated

The ignorance component of both of Tiwa's EIs can be canceled and reinforced (see handout), suggesting that they arise as a conversational implicature

- (4) **Pakhál-khî** lí-dom. Ang si-w pakhál, [2017.2.7]  
when-KHI go-PST 1SG know-NEUT when [cancellation]  
thêbo nága sóng os-ya.  
but 2SG.DAT tell AUX-NEG  
'I went sometime. I know when, but I won't tell you.'

## *-pha* as an *algún*-type EI

Tiwa's *-pha* indefinites are strikingly similar to Spanish *algún*:

1. must range over a non-singleton domain (11)
2. cannot scope out of islands (AO & MB 2013) (5)
3. epistemic effects disappear in downward-entailing environments (5)

Any analysis that accounts for *algún* can be extended to *-pha* indefinites

- (5) [**Shar-pha** phi-dom honmandé]<sub>CP</sub> thángane cha. [2016.2.42]  
who-PHA come-PST COMP correct NEG  
'It's not correct that someone came.'  
✗: There's a particular person (who the speaker doesn't know) that didn't come. \*∃ > -  
✓: Nobody came. - > ∃

## *-khi* as a wide-scope indefinite

*-khi* indefinites must scope over all other operators, including from inside scope islands (contrast with (5)):

- (6) [**Shar-khí** phi-dom honmandé]<sub>CP</sub> thángane cha. [2016.2.42]  
✓: There's a particular person, who the speaker doesn't know, that didn't come. ∃ > -  
✗: Nobody came. \*- > ∃

Obligatory wide scope holds for ∇, modals, conditionals, and attitude verbs (see handout for data)

## Choice function with existential closure

*-khi* pronouns are not definite:

- (7) **Shar-khí margî** rojá-ga, arô [2017.2.4]  
who-KHI woman sing-PFV and  
**shar-khí margî** rojá-ya-m.  
who-KHI woman sing-NEG-PST  
'Some woman sang, and some woman didn't sing.' → 2 women

Instead, widest scope can be derived through a choice functional analysis (Reinhart 1997, a.o.), with existential closure of the choice function variable at the highest level (following Matthewson 1999)

- (8) ∃ f [sang(f(woman))] & ∃ f [-sang(f(woman))]