

*Beyond evidentiality.  
The epistemic function of the suffix -wa  
in Aymara*

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In contrast to the specialized literature (Hardman 1986, 2001; Martinez-Vera 2020), this paper questions the direct evidential function of the sentence-type suffix *-wa* in «Northern Aymara» (Cerrón-Palomino 2000), an understudied Andean language spoken in the area around Lake Titicaca. By taking a narrow perspective on evidentiality, it proposes that *-wa* is a modal epistemic marker that indicates the speaker's high commitment to information. Semantic considerations that support this proposal focus on both the interplay of *-wa* with other grammatical categories and its distribution within the sentence. Additionally, considerations on the scope properties of the suffix, as applied by Hengeveld & Dall'Aglio-Hatthner (2015), are taken into account in the discussion.

*Keywords:* Aymara, direct evidentiality, epistemic modality, semantic scope.

*1. Introduction*

From existing descriptions (Hardman 1986, 2001) of evidentiality in «Northern Aymara» (Cerrón-Palomino 2000), it appears that this semantic domain is realized by a combination of inflectional morphology and sentence-type suffixes, which by their grammatical characterization are signals of a certain speech act (König & Siemund 2007) as well as modifiers of sentence types. In (1), for instance, the suffix *-wa* signals that both sentences are declarative.

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- (1) *Chachax Jusi sataw, warmisti Maruj satarakiw* (Hardman 2001: 223)  
 chacha-x(a) jusi-y(a) sa-ta-w(a), warmi-sti maruj(a) sa-ta-raki-w(a)  
 man-TOP Joseph-POL say-RE-DECL woman-ADD Marge say-RE-ADD-DECL  
 ‘The man is called Joe and the woman is called Marge’<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to the existing literature on evidentiality in Aymara, this paper aims to propose that the sentence-type suffix *-wa* does not express direct evidentiality, but rather it conveys the high degree of speaker’s commitment toward information. Semantic considerations that support this proposal focus on both the interplay of *-wa* with other grammatical categories and its distribution within the sentence. Additionally, considerations on the scope properties of the suffix, as applied by Hengeveld & Dall’Aglio-Hatthner (2015), are taken into account in the discussion of the functions of *-wa*.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 describes the correlation between evidential marking and grammatical categories, such as tense and sentence types. Section 3 is dedicated to the interplay between evidentiality and semantic scope. Section 4 provides some remarks on Aymara. This section is split into two subsections. Section 4.1 is dedicated to Aymara verb inflection and sentence types. Here, I pay particular attention to the grammatical functions of the suffix *-wa*. Section 4.2 provides an overview of the former descriptions of the Aymara evidential system. In Section 5, I argue against the status of *-wa* as direct evidential marker. Finally, in Section 6 I draw some final remarks and suggestions for future research.

## 2. Evidentiality, tense and sentence types

Aikhenvald (2004: 3) states that the core meaning of evidentiality is the expression of the source of information. However, in some languages the expression of the evidential domain also includes the speaker’s

<sup>1</sup> Given the difference between the examples and their morphophonemic representations, I decided to expand the canonical trilinear representation to a quadrilinear one. The first line represents examples as transcribed in the sources. The second line corresponds to their morphophonemic representation and signals phonotactic, syntactic, and morphophonemic vowel deletion. The third line represents the glossing. Finally, the fourth line corresponds to the translation. Glossing conforms to the Leipzig Glossing Rules. However, given that the Leipzig glossing rules list does not allow specifying all Aymara categories, I have also used the glosses proposed by Quartararo (2017).

epistemic evaluations about the truth of the information provided. In this regard, Faller (2002) claims:

[...] not all grammatical markers of evidentiality and modality are multi-functional. There are languages with markers which only indicate the speaker's source of information, and there are languages with markers which only indicate the speaker's judgment regarding the truth of the proposition expressed (Faller 2002: 83).

thus, evidentiality and epistemic modality, i.e., speaker's degree of commitment to the truth of the information (Palmer 1986: 51), are two different but cognitively close domains<sup>2</sup>. Along these lines, Brugmann & Macaulay (2015) proposes that in language-specific situations the conceptual overlap among cognitively close domains may involve up to four domains, such as evidentiality, degree of certainty, degree of commitment and degree of informativity.

Willett (1988: 57) formulates a typological schematization of evidential subdomains: «direct evidentiality» signals the information the speaker has witnessed, while «indirect evidentiality» indicates the information the speaker has not physically witnessed. This last subdomain is further divided into two subtypes: «inferring» and «reported». The former indicates the information acquired through reasoning processes, such as inference and assumption, and the latter refers to the information acquired through another person's report.

Depending on language-specific grammars, evidentials additionally interact with other grammatical categories in a number of ways. Typological research (Aikhenvald 2004) has demonstrated that while, on the one hand, the co-occurrence of evidentiality and past tenses is quite common, on the other hand, the co-occurrence of evidentials with future is rare. It is unlikely, in fact, to specify the source of information of an action that has not yet happened. In these cases, evidential markers usually acquire epistemic semantic extensions (Aikhenvald 2015: 15). So, for instance, the co-occurrence of the direct evidential *-ra* with the future in Shipibo-Konibo (Pano family, Peru) indicates certainty rather than direct evidence (Aikhenvald 2004: 261).

Concerning the interplay between evidentials and sentence types, it is cross-linguistically common to find evidential specification in declarative sentences, while the occurrence of evidentials in other sentence types, such as questions and commands, is documented in a

<sup>2</sup> For more information on this debate see Van der Auwera & Plungian (1998), De Haan (1999), Nuyts (2001), and Plungian (2001).



level. In German, for instance, the verb *sollen* ‘to have to’ when used as a reported evidential, works at the propositional level, while in Cuzco Quechua the clitic *-si*, which is also a reported evidential, works at the illocutionary level (Faller 2006).

In addition to these observations, Hengeveld & Dall’Aglio-Hatthner (2015) establishes a specific hierarchy that takes into consideration the semantic role performed by evidentials within grammatical levels.

Table 1. TAM and evidential subdomains<sup>4</sup>

<b>Interpersonal level</b>	Discourse act	Illocution	Communicated content	
Mood		basic illocution		
Evidentiality			reportativity	
<b>Representational level</b>	Propositional content	Episode	State-of-affairs	Situational concept
Mood	subjective epistemic modality	objective epistemic modality	event-oriented modality	participant-oriented modality
Evidentiality	inference	deduction	event perception	

Table (1) shows the results of the typological analysis developed in the framework of Functional Discourse Grammar on 64 Brazilian indigenous languages with grammatical expression of the evidential domain. Here, evidentials are defined by their scope properties and are placed on separate semantic layers. The analysis reveals that reported evidentials act at the interpersonal/illocutionary/pragmatic level, while the other evidential markers, i.e., results, reasoning and direct, act at the representational/propositional/semantic level. The implication is that reported evidentials do not interact and are not influenced by the structures that act at the propositional level such as negation or verb tenses. While inferential or direct evidentials, by performing their functions at the propositional level, interact with such structures and do not contribute to the illocutionary level.

<sup>4</sup> Modified representation of Hengeveld & Dall’Aglio-Hatthner’s scheme (2015: 492).

#### 4. Preliminary remarks on Northern Aymara

Aymara is one of the major indigenous languages of the Andean cordillera. It is spoken in the area that goes from Southern Peru (Tacna, Moquegua and Puno region), crosses the highlands of Bolivia and extends to the north of Chile (Tarapacá region)<sup>5</sup>.

In the 2012 Bolivian census (INE 2015), 836.570 respondents identified Aymara as their first language, making up roughly 8.3 % of the total population of Bolivia. The variety considered in this paper belongs to the northern branch of the *rama collavina* of the Aymaran language family (Cerrón-Palomino 2000). Speakers of this variety are concentrated in the areas around and to the southeast of Lake Titicaca<sup>6</sup>.

##### 4.1. Verb inflection and sentence types suffixes

Aymara is an agglutinative suffix-only language in which the preferred word order is SOV with modifier-head. It shows a morphologically complex verb system<sup>7</sup> in which obligatory inflectional suffixes show a high degree of fusion<sup>8</sup> (Müller, 2013: 39). Four persons interact in pairs within inflectional suffixes: the first person exclusive *naya* 'I', the second person *juma* 'you', the third person *jupa* 's/he' and the first person inclusive *jiwasa* 'we'. This interaction determines a verb conjugation of nine persons. Table (2) shows the relation between the two persons involved in each obligatory inflectional suffix. The suffix *-sma*, for instance, indicates the first exclusive person as subject and the second person as object.

<sup>5</sup> Aymara people represent 8.3 % of the Bolivian population, 1,6 % of the Peruvian population and, finally, 0,9 % of the Chilean population.

<sup>6</sup> For more information about the structure, the history, and the sociolinguistic situation of the Aymara family, see Cerrón-Palomino (2000) and Adelaar & Muysken (2004: 259-319)

<sup>7</sup> The process of verb formation is carried out through both derivational and inflectional verb suffixes.

<sup>8</sup> Obligatory inflectional suffixes do not indicate number, whose specification is not compulsory and depends on another suffix.

Table 2. The simple tense paradigm of the indicative mood

		OBJECT			
SUBJECT		1	1INCL	2	3 or none
	1			<i>-sma</i>	<i>-ta</i>
	1INCL				<i>-tan</i>
	2	<i>-ista</i>			<i>-ta</i>
	3	<i>-itu</i>	<i>-istu</i>	<i>-tam</i>	<i>-i</i>

In addition to person, such suffixes also convey grammatical information about tense and mood. The Aymara verb paradigm has four moods (indicative, potential, imperative and inferential) and four tenses, three for the expression of the non-future, i.e., simple, experienced past and non-experienced past, and only one for the expression of the future. The simple tense provides information about an action that started in a very recent past and is perceived as not yet completed in the present. The other two pasts specify the conclusion of an action in the past. Between them there does not seem to be a clear temporal distinction (Coler 2014: 243), but rather an evidential one. Finally, the future tense indicates any time after the present moment and may also be used as a polite imperative.

Ludovico Bertonio describes sentence-type suffixes<sup>9</sup> as «*partículas que tomadas porsí no significan y ayuntadas alos nombres y verbos les da mayor o nueva significación*<sup>10</sup>» (Bertonio 1603: 261). The existing descriptions of Northern Aymara (Ebbing 1965; Hardman 2001; Wexler 1967) indicate the presence of a variable number of sentence-type suffixes<sup>11</sup>. Such suffixes occupy the same morpho-syntactical slot,

<sup>9</sup> Coler, Emlen & Benegas-Flores (2020) names these suffixes ‘phrase-final suffixes’.

<sup>10</sup> Tr. ‘Particles that considered by themselves are meaningless, but when attached to nouns or verbs give them greater and new meaning’.

<sup>11</sup> Despite performing different grammatical functions, Aymara grammars (Hardman 2001: 170-182; Hardman *et al.* 2001: 279-292) group these suffixes as a single morphologic class. Below, I indicate their value: *-xa*, attenuator/topic marker; *-wa*, declarative/copula/focus marker; *-sa<sub>1</sub>*, content question marker; *-ti*, copula/negative/polar question marker; *-sti*, question/adversative; *-ya*, polite/attenuator; *-sa<sub>2</sub>*, coordination; *-cha*, alternative question; *-pi*, confirmation; finally, *-chim/-chixa*, dubitative questions.

are mutually exclusive, and can attach to constituents of any root class with a limited number of restrictions. Hardman (2001) differentiates between primary and secondary sentence-type suffixes: the former (-*wa*, -*sa* and -*ti*) occur no more than once per sentence (Hardman 2001: 171), while the latter may occur more often.

The suffix -*wa* is mostly described as the declarative marker<sup>12</sup>. It shows a complementary distribution with the interrogative suffixes -*ti* (2) and -*sa* (3), and with the zero-mark of the imperative sentences (4). In negative sentences, it occurs after the negative particle *jani* ‘no’ and in combination with the suffixes -*xa* and -*ti* (5).

- (2) *Mariyat wawar t’ant’ churi* (Hardman 2001: 174)  
 Mariya-t(i)      wawa-r(u)    t’ant(a)-<sub>c</sub> Ø      chur(a)-i  
 Mary-Q            baby-ALL    bread-ACC      give-SPL.3>3  
 ‘Did Mary give the baby some bread?’
- (3) *Kunas sutimaxa* (Hardman 2001: 173)  
 kuna-sa      suti-ma-xa  
 what-Q      name-2.POSS-TOP  
 ‘What is your name?’
- (4) *Jum saram* (Hardman 2001: 113)  
 jum(a)    sara-m  
 2          go-IMP.2>3  
 ‘Go!’
- (5) *Janiw makin sapa~~x~~ lurkspati*<sup>13</sup> (Hardman *et al.* 2001: 273)  
 jani-w(a)    makin(a)    sapa-x(a)      lur(a)-ka-spa-ti  
 no-DECL    machine    alone-TOP    work-NCOMPL-POT.3>3-Q/NEG  
 ‘Machines cannot work alone.’

Modern Aymara shows the lack of lexically expressed copula (Adelaar & Muysken 2004: 275). Copular sentences may be expressed through both non-verbal and verbal constructions. Affirmative equational sentences, for instance, are expressed through the juxtaposition of the constituents and the suffix -*wa* (6-7) which, in such cases, transforms a sequence of nominal roots into a clause.

<sup>12</sup> Hardman (2001: 171) defines it as an affirmative suffix, even though -*wa* occurs also in negative sentences.

<sup>13</sup> The data discussed in this paper are based on previous literature, in particular, Hardman (1986, 2001), original fieldwork annotations and the *Aymara Collection of Geraldine Quartararo* published in the AILLA.



(6) *Jupa nayan tatajawa* (GQ\_100615<sup>14</sup>)  
 jupa naya-n(a) tata-ja-wa  
 3 1-GEN/LOC FATHER-1.POSS-DECL  
 ‘He is my father.’

(7) *Nayan tataja jupawa* (GQ\_100615)  
 naya-n(a) tata-ja jupa-wa  
 1-GEN/LOC FATHER-1.POSS 3-DECL  
 ‘\*My father is him.’

The examples (6) and (7), despite the opposite order of their constituents, have the same meaning. In (6), the subject is *jupa* ‘he’, whereas in (7) the subject is *nayan tataja* ‘my father’. In these constructions the use of *-wa* is mandatory, it always appears attached to the predicative expression. The consequence of these two observations is that in non-verbal copular constructions the suffix has two further grammatical roles, that is, it specifies the predicative expression and marks the sentence as declarative. Unlike non-verbal constructions, in verbal predicates the use of the suffix is not compulsory; in these cases, the suffix can be attached to the focus constituent of the declarative sentence (Klose 2015). A clear example is given in (8) where the suffix is attached to the new information given in the answer.

(8) A: *Kunapachas Marcox utapan jalaqi* (GQ\_100615)  
 kunapacha-s(a) Marco-x(a) uta-pa-n(a) jala-q(a)-i  
 when-Q Marco-TOP home-3POSS-GEN/LOC run-DW-SPL.3  
 ‘When did Marco fall at home?’

B: *Masüruw utapan jalaqi*  
 masüru-w(a) uta-pa-n(a) jala-q(a)-i  
 yesterday-DECL home-3.POSS-GEN/LOC run-DW-SPL.3  
 ‘He fell at home yesterday.’

#### 4.3. Former research on the evidential system in Aymara

Aymara shows a mandatory and grammatically coded evidential system that conveys evidence through a complex combination of inflectional morphology and embedded clauses realized with the verb *saña* ‘to say’ (9).

<sup>14</sup> This reference indicates all the examples extracted from fieldwork annotations. According to the order: initials of the field worker’s name and date of the annotation.

- (9) “*Ukax ukawjitaxa Kopakabana mamitana samarawipawa*” *siwa* (Quartararo 2017: 117)
- |                            |                  |            |                  |
|----------------------------|------------------|------------|------------------|
| uka-x(a)                   | uka-wj-ita-xa    | Kopakabana | mam(a)-ita-na    |
| that-TOP                   | that-LOC-DIM-TOP | Copacabana | lady-DIM-GEN/LOC |
| sama-ra-wi-pa-wa           | s(a)-i-wa        |            |                  |
| rest-ITER-NMLZ-3.POSS-DECL | say-SPL.3-DECL   |            |                  |
- ‘He says that this area had to be the resting place of the Virgin of Copacabana.’

Some of the grammars on Northern Aymara (Ebbing 1965; Wexler 1967) do not provide information on the way in which this language expresses evidentiality. Moreover, the specialized literature on the topic (Hardman 1986, 2001; Levin 2004; Quartararo 2017) is limited and does not describe homogeneously the evidential system of this language. Hardman (1986) argues for a three choices evidential system: «personal knowledge», which coincides with Willett’s (1988) direct evidentiality, i.e., «knowledge acquired by personal experience through the senses –primarily, but not exclusively, visual» (Hardman 1986: 115); «knowledge-through-language», which fits perfectly into Willett’s reported evidentiality; finally, «non-personal knowledge», which indicates the whole spectrum of information where there is no direct contact with the source (Hardman 1986: 116) and encompasses both reported and inferring evidentiality. These three subdomains are expressed through three evidential markers, i.e., the sentence-type suffix *-wa*, the verb *saña* ‘to say’, and the non-experienced past tense, respectively. Hardman (2001: 106), moreover, classifies the Aymara verb paradigm according to an evidential parameter, and creates a dichotomous system that distinguishes personal knowledge, expressed through the simple tense (10) and the experienced past (11), and non-personal knowledge, expressed through the non-experienced past, the inferential mood (both exemplified in 12) and the dubitative suffix *-chi*<sup>15</sup> (13). The following examples illustrate these five evidential markers.

- (10) *Kusisiñat umxatt’apxta* (Quartararo 2017: 141)
- |                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| kusi-si-ña-t(a)        | um(a)-xat(a)-t’a-p.x(a)-ta |
| be.happy-REFL-ANMZ-ABL | drink-AUG-INCE-PL-SPL.1    |
- ‘For the happiness we got drunk.’

<sup>15</sup> In this paper, I follow the Coler’s (2014: 446-452) interpretation of *chi* as a verbal suffix morphologically separate from tense inflectional suffixes.

- (11) *Nayra Yungasana trabajkayat* (Quartararo 2017: 118)  
 Nayra Yungasa-na trabaj(a)-ka-yat(a)  
 Before Yungas- GEN/LOC work-NCOMPL-PE.1  
 ‘Before I worked in Yungas.’
- (12) *Qatatpacha, ukat jalstawayxatayna wiskhupaw* (Quartararo 2017: 89)  
 qatat(i)-pacha uka-t(a) jal(a)-s(i)-ta-way(a)-xa-tayna wiskhu-pa-w(a)  
 drag-INF.3>3 that-ABL run-REFL-ATOP-DIST-COMPL-PNOE.3 sandal-3.POSS-DECL  
 ‘They must drag him, that’s why his sandals came out.’
- (13) *Utar purisinxa kullakaruy nuwxix “kawkis manq’axa” sasay, inas jan sum manq’as churcbinti* (Quartararo 2017: 90)  
 uta-r(u) puri-sin(a)-xa kullaka-ru-y(a) nuw(a)-x(a)-i-x(a)  
 homa-ALL arrive-SUB-TOP sister-ALL-POL hit-COMPL-SPL.3>3-TOP  
 kawki-s(a) manq’a-xa sa-sa-y(a) inas(a) jan(i) sum(a) manq’a-s(a)  
 where-Q food-TOP say-SUB-POL maybe no good food-ADD  
 chur(a)-k(a)-chi-n(a)-ti  
 give-NCOMPL-DUB-PE.3>3-Q/NEG  
 ‘When he gets home, he hits the sister, he says *where’s the food?* maybe she didn’t give him good food.’

As briefly discussed in Section 2, the conflation of evidentials with epistemic values has been broadly debated. With specific regard to the correlation between these domains in Northern Aymara, the literature is limited. Levin (2004), on the one hand, relates the simple, the experienced-past and the non-experienced-past tenses to a decreasing level of commitment: high, mid and low, respectively. Quartararo (2017), on the other hand, observes that the embedded clauses realized with the verb *saña* ‘to say’, the non-experienced-past and the inferential mood, if not modified by other modal markers, convey a mid-level of commitment to the information provided. Furthermore, Orellana de Quineche (2007) briefly mentions the epistemic function of the suffix *-wa* in the Zepata (Peru) variety of Aymara. In line with these studies, this paper represents the first attempt to describe the correlation in Northern Aymara between the use of the sentence type suffix *-wa* and the expression of high commitment toward the information provided.

### 5. Is *-wa* a direct evidential marker?

By looking at Aymara and the interplay between tenses and *-wa*, it appears that this suffix occurs with tenses indicating direct evidentiality, such as the experienced past (14-15), but also with tenses indicating indirect evidentiality, such as the non-experienced past (16-17) and the inferential mood (18-19).

- (14) *Jupaw jupar churana* (Hardman *et al.* 2001: 147)  
 jupa-w(a) jupa-r(u) chura-na  
 3-DECL 3-ALL give-PE.3>3  
 ‘She gave it to him (I saw).’
- (15) *Ukanak qhathuruw apapxana* (Quartararo AILLA: 2\_AY\_TASK)  
 uka-nak(a)-<sub>c</sub> qhathu-ru-w(a) apa-p.xa-na  
 that-PL-ACC market-ALL-DECL take-PL-PE.3>3  
 ‘They were taking those to the market.’
- (16) *Jupaw jupar churatayna* (Hardman *et al.* 2001: 148)  
 jupa-w(a) jupa-r(u) chura-tayna  
 3-DECL 3-ALL give-PNOE.3>3  
 ‘She gave it to him (but I didn’t see her).’
- (17) *Jay ukham uka chikaw abuelitajax jutxatayna* (Quartararo AILLA: 5\_AY\_MIS)  
 Jay uk(a)-jama uka chika-w(a) abuel-ita-ja-x(a)  
 INTERJ that-CP that together-DECL grandmother-DIM-1.POSS-TOP  
 jut(a)-xa-tayna  
 come-COMPL-PNOE.3>3  
 ‘So, my grandmother came together with that.’
- (18) *Jupaw churpachana* (Hardman *et al.* 2001: 156)  
 jupa-w(a) chur(a)-pachana  
 3-DECL give-INFR.PST.3>3  
 ‘S/he must have given it to him.’
- (19) *Kha Waqi Wat’apampa kumunidadanakax akaruw jutapxapachaxa* (Quartararo AILLA: 5\_AY\_MIS)  
 kha Waqi Wat’apampa kumunidade-naka-x(a) aka-ru-w(a) juta-p.xa-pacha-xa  
 that Waqi Wat’apampa community-PL-TOP this-ALL-DECL come-PL-INFR.3-TOP  
 ‘The communities Waqi and Wat’apampa must have come here.’

In the examples above (14-19), the three verb tenses convey evidential meaning. What, therefore, is the function of *-wa*? The answer to this question depends on a variety of observations. If *-wa* were a direct evidential marker, then, Aymara would belong to that group of languages that allow the double marking of the information source. In such languages, the presence of multiple evidentials in the same sentence indicates additional specifications regarding the source of information. In Shipibo-Konibo, for example, the co-occurrence of the visual and the inferential marker indicates that the reasoning provided is based upon an evidence coming from the speaker (Aikhenvald 2004: 89). By applying this interpretation to the examples (16-19), the resulting value of the interplay between *-wa* and the indirect evidentials *-tayna* and *-pacha* would be ‘I had a direct evidence at the basis of this inference/report’. This latter interpretation is however different from

that proposed by Hardman (2001) and exemplified in both (16) and (18). The translations given by the author are, indeed, ‘S/he gave it to him (but I didn’t see her)’ and ‘s/he must have given it to him’ and do not account for either the evidential value of the suffix *-wa* or its interplay with indirect evidentials, i.e., a direct source of information as basis of the inference. Rather, they exclusively highlight the evidential meaning of the inflectional morphology, thus suggesting the lack of the direct evidential value of *-wa*. Similarly, it is impossible to apply the interpretation ‘I had a direct evidence at the basis of this inference/report’ to the examples (17) and (19), since here the speaker cannot have directly witnessed a historical event, i.e., the political division between Bolivia and Peru of the Lake Titicaca, which dates back to the 1930s. With regard to the interpretation of the example (14) and (15), the direct evidential function of *-wa* is even more uncertain. Here, the use of the suffix, as direct evidential, with the experienced past entails a redundant marking of the same type of information source. I am not aware of any typological study documenting such a situation; moreover, the co-occurrence of two evidentials of the same type within the same clause does not seem likely, unless one of these two markers inserts an additional piece of information to the mere expression of the information source.

In questioning the direct evidential value of *-wa*, it is of particular relevance the occurrence of the suffix with structures belonging to the *irrealis*.

- (20) *Churäwa uma* (Quartararo AILLA: 1\_AY\_TASK)

chura:-wa                      uma  
give-FUT.1-DECL              water  
‘I will give water.’

- (21) *Jichbax nayax apthapiw aka jamuqanakx* (Quartararo AILLA: 3\_AY\_TASK)

jichha-x(a)    naya-x(a)    apthapi:-w(a)              aka    jamuqa-nak(a)-Ø-x(a)  
now-TOP              1-TOP              pick.up-FUT.1-DECL    this    picture-PL-ACC-TOP  
‘Now, I will pick up the pictures.’

- (22) *Ukhamaspawa* (Quartararo AILLA: 2\_AY\_TASK)

uk(a)-jama-spa-wa  
that-CP-POT.3-DECL  
‘It may be so.’

- (23) *Awtoridadanakaw aka waynanakar lup’iyaspa*

awtoridada-naka-w(a)    aka    wayna-naka-r(u)                      lup’i-ya-spa  
autoridad-PL-DECL              this    young.person-PL-ALL              pensar-CAUS-POT.3  
‘The authorities can change young people’s minds.’

- (24) *Munstaxa ukax churamawa* (GQ\_120615)  
mun(a)-chi-ta-xa      uka-x(a)      chura-ma-wa  
want-DUB-SPL.2>3-TOP      that-TOP      give-FUT.1>2-DECL  
‘If you want, I will give you.’

In the examples above (20-24), *-wa* occurs with the future tense (20-21), the potential mood (22-23), and within a conditional sentence (24), respectively. Aikhenvald (2004: 261) demonstrates that the co-occurrence of direct evidentials with future tense indicates certainty rather than direct evidence. In (20), the speaker is describing and, at the same time, self-identifying with the character of a picture<sup>16</sup>. The knowledge of the context in which the example (20) was uttered allows me to state that here the speaker does not have certainty about the truth of the action described, but rather s/he is committing to the information provided. In other words, s/he is establishing his/her own epistemic stance by ensuring that s/he will perform the action, as clearly shown in (21). It follows that the use of *-wa* in (20-21) conveys another piece of information, different from evidentiality. The examples (22), (23) and (24) support this last consideration. The use of the direct evidential with the potential mood (22-23) generates indeed a semantic conflict. Direct evidentials entail the truth of the proposition; by using them, speakers claim to have personally witnessed an event. However, in (22) the speaker declares that he is not sure of the truth of what he is saying, as shown by the use of the potential mood, and in (23) the use of the potential mood aims to indicate that, in the opinion of the speaker, the fact that the authorities may change young people's minds is considered likely. The use of *-wa*, consequently, cannot signal direct evidence. Again, it conveys another kind of information, that is, the speaker's will to express his personal belief regarding the high probability that the information provided is true. In (24), *-wa* occurs in a conditional sentence. In such structures, the realization of the apodosis is conditioned by the realization of the if-clause. The speaker, therefore, cannot be certain about the truth of the proposition, but similarly to what seen in (20-23), s/he can commit to it by ensuring the fulfillment of the action in case the if-clause becomes true. The examples (25) and (26) further support this argumentation.

<sup>16</sup> In (17), participants were performing the *Family Problems Picture*, an interactive task that consists of 16 pictures in black and white.

(25) *Jupa<sup>w</sup> ut unji* (Hardman 1986: 118)  
 jupa-w(a) ut(a)-<sub>c</sub>Ø unj(a)-i  
 2-DECL house-ACC see-SPL.3>3  
 ‘She sees/saw the house’

(26) *Pirasanak apthapxi, ukham uñjta*. (Quartararo AILLA: 2\_AY\_PEAR)  
 pirasa-nak(a)-<sub>c</sub>Ø aptha-p.x(a)-i uk(a)-jam(a)-<sub>c</sub>Ø uñj(a)-ta  
 peer-PL-ACC pick-PL-SPL.3>3 that-CP-ACC see-SPL.1>3  
 ‘They pick pears, I have seen so’

Hardman (1986) exemplifies the function of the suffix *-wa* as direct evidential thanks to the example (25). Here, the presence of the verb *unja* ‘to see’ supports the idea that the suffix *-wa* signals direct evidence. In (26), however, despite the presence of the verb *unja* ‘to see’, the suffix *-wa* does not occur. By considering *-wa* as a direct evidential, both examples (25) and (26) involve a certain degree of inconsistency. In fact, if one takes into consideration the simple tense as a marker of direct evidence (Hardman 2001: 106), the example (25) would feature a triple marking of the same information source (*-wa*, the simple tense and the verb *unja* ‘to see’). Such a situation has already been questioned for (14-15), but in (26) the direct evidential status of *-wa* becomes even more unlikely. If, instead, one regards *-wa* as the only direct evidential, thus avoiding the previous scenario, then the absence of the suffix in (26) determines the lack of any evidential grammatical specification in the clause, impossible to accept in a language, such as Aymara, in which the expression of information source is mandatory and grammatically coded. In both examples, the speakers had direct visual contact with the source. Hence, the epistemic difference between them, related to the presence/lack of *-wa*, cannot be attributed to the expression of the information source. It rather lies in the different degree of commitment to information: in (25) the speaker vouches for it, while in (26) s/he does not.

By moving this discussion to the interplay between the scope properties of *-wa* as direct evidential and those of the suffix as sentence type marker (see Section 3), the description of the suffix as a direct evidential raises a further semantic incongruence. As declarative sentence-type marker, *-wa* takes scope over the whole sentence and cannot participate in the description of the propositional content (see Figure 1). On the contrary, as direct evidential, it modifies the propositional content by adding information on the state of affairs (see Table 1). Given its position in the hierarchy as direct evidential, inferior to all other evidential, *-wa* cannot either scope over the

illocutionary level or act as a sentence type marker. This inconsistency leads to two further observations. Firstly, in the case of non-verbal copular constructions (see Section 4.2), the scope properties of *-wa* as direct evidential marker are not compatible with its scope properties as declarative sentence type marker. In these cases, in fact, *-wa* only acts on the illocutionary level as a sentence type marker that transforms a sequence of nominal roots into a clause, without adding any epistemic information to the sentence, neither evidential nor modal. Secondly, given that in verbal constructions the use of *-wa* is not mandatory and speakers can formulate declarative sentences without the suffix, as seen in (26), I have argued for an epistemic modal value of the suffix that indicates the speaker's high commitment to the truth of the given information. Such an argument is supported by the semantic analysis of the co-occurrence of the suffix with indirect evidentials, such as the non-experienced past and the inferential mood, but also by its absence in contexts where the visual contact with the source is clearly stated. As marker of subjective epistemic modality (see Table 1), *-wa* contributes to add information about the propositional content, is located on the higher semantic layer of the propositional level, and consequently allows the interplay with the other evidential subdomains without semantic conflicts.

## 6. Summary and conclusions

By taking a broad perspective on evidentiality, the specialized literature has described *-wa* as a direct evidential marker. The present paper adopts a different stance on the issue and considers that «stating that something is probable, that is, establishing one's epistemic stance, is independent of expressing information source» (Aikhenvald 2004: 259). On the basis of this observation, this paper has argued against the direct evidential status of the suffix *-wa* in Northern Aymara. Along the discussion, I have brought to light the semantic inconsistencies that the interpretation of *-wa* as direct evidential involves in a number of different contexts. In addition, I have provided an overview of the contrasting scope properties that the suffix has when acting simultaneously as a direct evidential and as sentence type marker. Finally, I have proposed that the suffix *-wa* acts as an epistemic marker that indicates the speaker's high commitment to information.

This last proposal entails two additional implications regarding the expression of both the modal and the evidential domain in Aymara. Firstly, it redefines Aymara evidential system by establishing



that the direct evidential sub-domain is realized by inflectional morphology. Secondly, it suggests that in Aymara the expression of the evidential and the modal domains is conveyed through a separate morphology. On the one hand, evidentiality is expressed through some verb tenses and the embedded clauses with *saña*. On the other hand, epistemic modality is expressed through a group of suffixes among which there are the dubitative *-chi*, the re-confirmational *-pi*, and the assertive *-wa*.

The analysis of *-wa* proposed in the present paper allows to account for the semantic inconsistencies implied in its description as direct evidential marker and, additionally, gives new insights into the linguistic mechanism that governs the behavior of such a suffix. In the light of the above considerations, it turns out that the expression of the modal domain in northern Aymara, but also in the other varieties of this language, needs further investigation. Along these lines, additional first-hand data are needed in order to map out in a greater detail the possibilities of expressing epistemic information in this language.

#### 7. Symbols and abbreviations

1 – First Person; 2 – Second Person 3 – Third Person; ABL – Ablative; ACC – Accusative; ADD – Additive; ALL – Allative; ANMZ – Agent Nominalizer; ATOP – Movement above; AUG – Augmentative; CAUS – Causative; COMPL – Completive Aspect; CP – Comparative; DECL – Declarative; DIM – Diminutive; DIST – Distal; DUB – Dubitative; DW – Downward; FUT – Future; GEN – Genitive; IMP – Imperative; INCE – Inceptive; NCOMPL – Incompletive Aspect; INFR – Inferential; INTERJ – Interjection; Q – Interrogative; ITER – Iterative; LOC – Locative; NEG – Negative; NMLZ – Nominalizer; PE – Experienced Past; PL – Plural; PNOE – Non-Experienced Past; POL – Politeness; POSS – Possessive; PST – Past; RE – Resultative; REFL – Reflexive; SPL – Simple tense; SUB – Subordinator; TOP – topicalizer.

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