Epistemicity, Implicature, and Scalarity of *Posta* in Argentine Spanish

This paper explores the epistemic and pragmatic functions of the expression *posta* in Argentine Spanish, with a focus on its use as a marker of epistemic commitment, intensification, and authenticity. While *posta* is commonly used in informal registers and especially prevalent among younger speakers, it remains relatively underexamined. Building on a small body of prior work (Rojas 2012), this study addresses this gap by offering a comprehensive analysis grounded in cognitive-functional linguistics and a neo-Gricean pragmatic approach.

The primary objective of this study is to answer the question: What do speakers mean without saying when they use *posta*? To do so, I first establish that *posta* operates as a conventional epistemic marker that encodes a strong degree of speaker commitment toward the truth of a proposition building on theoretical frameworks about modality systems (Palmer, 2001) as well as Traugott's (1989, 1995) theory of semantic-pragmatic change, particularly her account of subjectification in the development of stance expressions. This is followed by an analysis that draws on Gricean and neo-Gricean theories of implicature (Grice, 1975; Horn 1984, 2004) where I explore pragmatic tests such as non-cancellability to argue that *posta* conveys a conventional implicature of speaker epistemicity which cannot be felicitously negated without resulting in pragmatic infelicity.

Moreover, I argue that, beyond its core epistemic function, *posta* is also sensitive to context and it operates on a pragmatic scale (Horn, 1984) offering nuances of authenticity and intensification that would not be possible to understand from its conventionalized lexical meaning only. In terms of epistemic commitment, I propose that *posta* occupies the highest point of speaker certainty, above expressions like *de verdad* and *en serio,* holding scope over entire utterances (e.g., *me alegro posta*, *me parece muy hermoso posta*) and intensifying their meaning. In terms of authenticity, I argue that *posta* functions adjectivally or adverbially to evaluate something as genuine or real (e.g., *una conversación posta*, un *jugador posta*), also placing it as endpoint marking in the scale. These uses, while semantically related to the epistemic core, demonstrate how posta is an expression that is sensitive to contextual cues.

Data for this project is drawn from various sources, involving a combination of corpus data (from AMERESCO and esTenTen23) and examples drawn from social media platforms to help show the ways in which *posta* operates as an epistemic marker as well as a discourse-anchoring device that validates a speaker's stance in interaction. Later, I use examples from these same sources to explain how *posta* needs to be interpreted by placing it in the highest point of an epistemic commitment and authenticity scale in order to understand relationships of entailment and implicature when compared to lower-bounding expressions in that scale.

By articulating these scalar contrasts and their context-sensitive implications, this study contributes to understanding how lexical items with conventionalized meanings remain sensitive to pragmatic interpretation. Ultimately, I propose that *posta* operates as a discourse marker of epistemic strength that can result in intensified interpretations of utterances, thus offering insight

into how Argentine Spanish speakers use informal language to negotiate authenticity, speaker commitment, and evaluative stance in everyday interaction.

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