ENFIELD ET AL. 2020 | 6 APR 2020

Consistencies in cross-linguistic solutions to problems of communication:
- → solutions that are easier/more natural to learn
- → similar evolutionary language-internal processes

¡Phenom. at hand here:¡ Preference for interjection-type answers to polar questions
⌐ vs. repetition type

Alternative systems for answering polar questions
- Ⓐ YES - NO (interjection) matching question polarity
- Ⓑ AGREE-DISAGREE (injctn) truth/falsity of proposition regardless of Q phrasing
- Ⓒ [echo system] w/ no special answer words, but using repetion from the Q

ENFIELD & AL. ADD: — Sadock & Zwicky (1985)

- ✳ basically two options
- ✳ multiple options can be used w/i languages   ↦ and gestures (eg. nods)
- ✳ in addition to "designated" answer injections, things like mm, ch-huh, & yep need to be included.
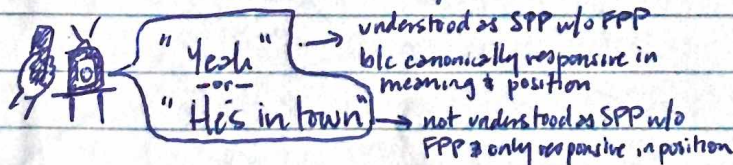
ASSERTION: Repetition-type answers are pragmatically **marked**   *markedness in learning & by evolt?*

⌐ "used more frequently & straightforwardly"
⌐ passes the Gricean test

DIVISION of SEMANTIC-PRAGMATIC LABOR

Interjections	✓	✗
Repetitions	✗	✓
	Semantically encode confirm.	conveys prop. content

INTERPERSONAL ASYMMETRIES
- Ⓐ Epistemic "tilt" toward answerer, yaned sleepness
- Ⓑ Sequential agency SPP is coerced
- Ⓒ Thematic agency FPP sets precedent for theme/
ownership of interest in FPP proposition
"formulated through the voice and words of
the questioner" (286). SPP repetition pushes
back against this.

"Yesh" ---> understood as SPP w/o FPP
—or—   b/c canonically responsive in
"He's in town" ---> meaning & position
             ---> not understood as SPP w/o
             FPP & only responsive in position

Interjections are intrinsically better suited to confirming w/o doing anything more

DATASET

- Polar answers from 172 interactions in 14 typologically diverse lgs — spontaneous informal conversation
- Only those soliciting answers (ie. non-rhetorical), separated by type (INTER/REPET), & speech act
  (Info Req, 10th-Init. Repair/Req. for Confirmation)
  ⌐ ambiguous cases & non-answer responses discarded (& disconfirmations)

RESULTS

^{↓B.Portugese} ^{↓ǂAkhoe Haiǁom} ^{↓Tseltal}

- 11/14 languages use interjections >= 80% of the time; others are 65%, 51%, 34%
  - ↳ "global predominance" of this response strategy
- Logistic regression of repetition response
  - ↳ sig. more likely following Requests for Info (vs. Repair / Req. for Confirmation)
  - ↳ sig. more likely in B.Port, ǂAk.H., & Tseltal
    - ↳ language matters
- Brazilian Portuguese: while conventional interjections ("sim") are rare, mm-hm & head nods are not ⇝ while "sim" is marked, interjections as a whole are not. Also 'ser' can be used outside of the repetition context.
- ǂAkhoe Haiǁom: linked to avoidance of apparent coercion in the SPP provision (cultural bias relating to hunter-gatherer status) ⇝ unusually high proportion of Qs (0.59) are content, not polar, & use of polar questions is uncommon for requesting confirmation. Overall response rate is ~80% (~15% less than avg.) ← social norm of egalitarianism, -AND-
- Tseltal: linked to cultural norm of desiring to share a single position on matters — repetitive use is not competitive when used to narrow the epistemic/thematic gap (e.g. as evidenced by S's repetition of A's repetition of S's utterance) ⇝ sharing agency (this occurs in ~50% of seqs w/ repetition responses)
  - ↳ languages w/ this bias maintain some evidence of pragmatic markedness, or overcome this by relation to a strong cultural norm

|Prediction| NO language will mirror the norm (e.g. repetition answers > 90%)