



Repetitions as general knowledge evidentials

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Main claim

- *Languages lacking evidential paradigms have systems of evidential strategies and lexical expressions of evidentiality (Aikhenvald 2018).*
- *The evidential meaning of general knowledge ascribed to the proposition can be expressed by the use of repetitions, such as nominal tautologies.*
- *Repetitions perform similar roles to general knowledge evidentials attested in languages, such as Mamaindê (Eberhard 2018) or Quechua (Hintz and Hintz 2017).*
- *This perspective solves inconsistencies in previous analyses of repetitions.*



Outline

1. *Background: general knowledge as an evidential category.*
2. *Data: English examples from Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and web-sources.*
3. *Analysis: the common properties of repetitions and morphologically encoded general knowledge evidentials.*
4. *Conclusions.*



Background

Table 1. Taxonomy of evidence types.

DIRECT	INDIRECT	
	INFERENCE	HEARSAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● visual● auditory● other sensory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● reasoning● observable results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● secondhand● thirdhand● folklore

(Willet 1988 as cited in Korotkova 2020)



Distinctive properties

- *Diversity*
- *Non-concreteness*
- *Reliability*
- *Involvement of several participants*

(Aikhenvald 2018; Eberhard 2018; Hintz and Hintz 2017; Kittilä 2019)



Diversity I

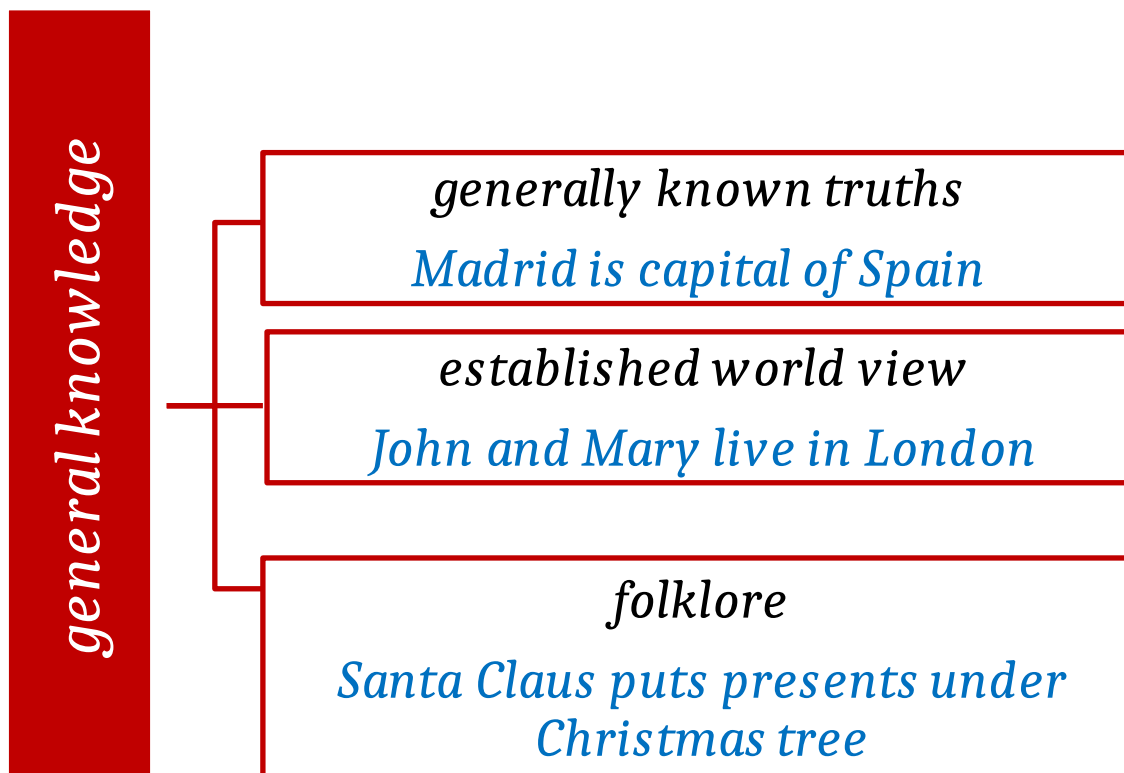


Fig. 1. Types of general knowledge.

(Kittilä 2019)



Diversity II

SOUTH CONCHUCOS QUECHUA — GENERAL KNOWLEDGE TYPES

- a. GNOMIC “*Sinqa-:-cha:” ni-n.*
nose-1-MUT say-3
‘“This is my nose” she says.’
- b. ENCYCLOPEDIA *Yunka-cho:-cha: mo:nu-kuna-qa ka-n.*
jungle-LOC-MUT monkey-PL-TOP be-3
‘There are monkeys in the jungle.’
- c. TRADITIONAL *Aw ishke: ka-n-cha: yuriwa.*
yes two be-3-MUT yuriwa
‘Right, there were two yuriwa dance groups (as always).’
- d. GENERALIZING *Wanu-tsi-ya-sh-cha: Manuel-ta-qa.*
die-CAUS-PL-PST.R3-MUT Manuel-OBJ-TOP
‘(The police) killed Manuel.’

(Hintz & Hintz 2017)



Diversity III

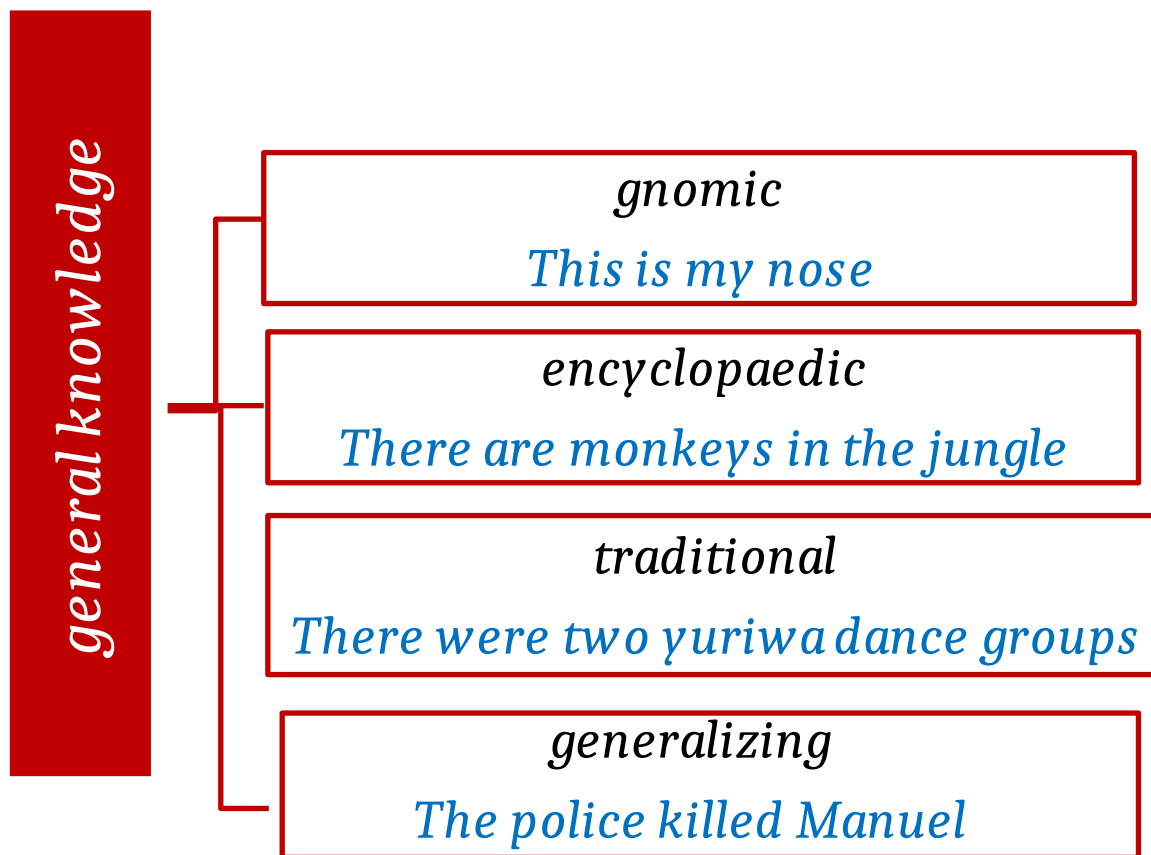


Fig. 2. Types of general knowledge in Quechua. (Hintz & Hintz 2017)



Diversity IV

Table 2. Quechua evidential markers recruited for general knowledge.

QUECHUA LANGUAGE	FORM		REGION	REFERENCE
Cusco	<i>-mi</i>	'DIR'	Southern	Faller (2002:133)
Pastaza	<i>-shi</i>	'RPT'	Northern	Nuckolls (2008:83)
South Conchucos	<i>-cha:</i>	'MUT'	Central	Hintz (2006)
Sihuas	<i>-sha</i>	'RPT.G'	Central	This article, section 7.3

(Hintz & Hintz 2017)



Non-concreteness

- *General knowledge is based on the speaker's previous experiences of the world, but the original source of information (which can be of any of the evidence types) does not need to be specified.*



(Kittilä 2019)



Reliability

- *General knowledge presents very reliable type of evidence, which accounts for the use of direct evidentials. The coding is based on the current information status of the given piece of information, because it is relevant to convey the message that the denoted information is reliable.*

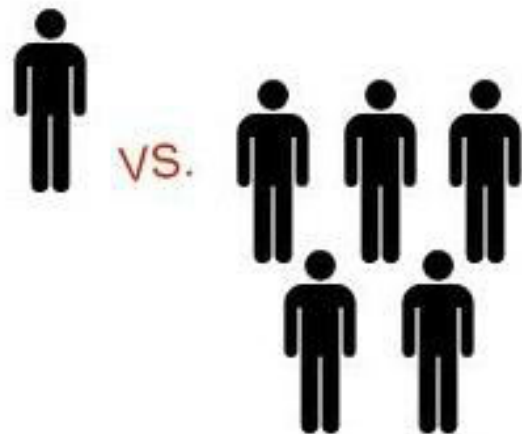


(Eberhard 2018; Hintz and Hintz 2017; Kittilä 2019)



Involvement of several participants

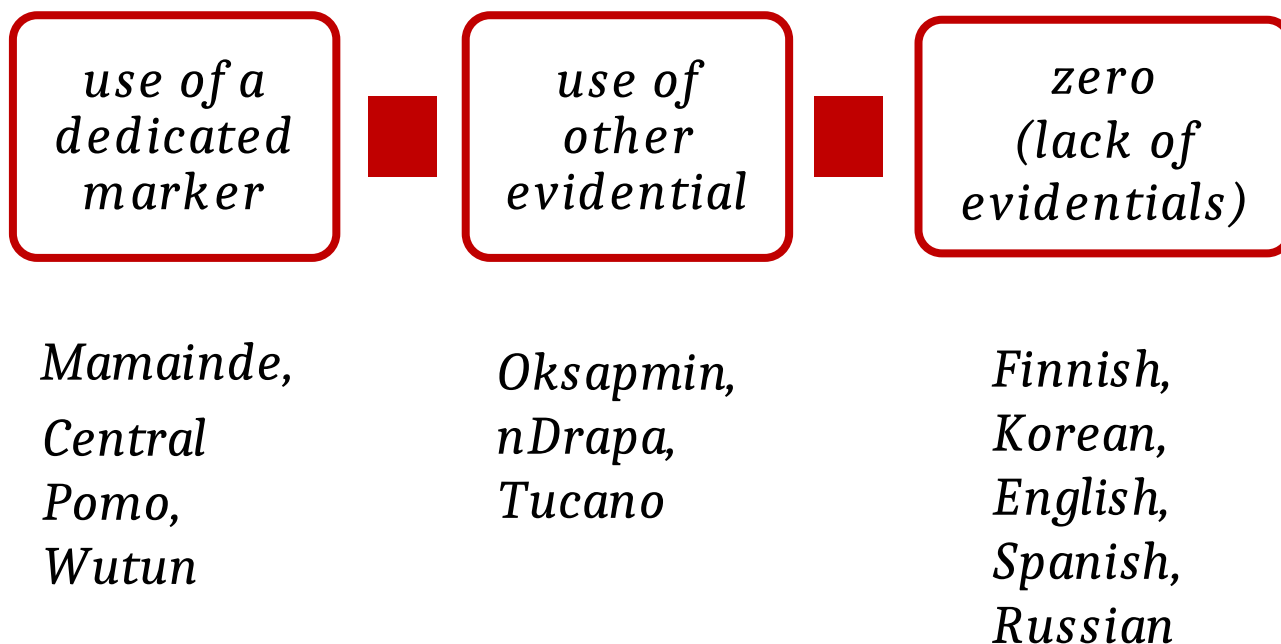
- *Most evidential types include only one participant at a time, while general knowledge, instead of a single participant, involves all members of a speech community.*



(Eberhard 2018; Hintz and Hintz 2017)



Coding general knowledge in languages



(Aikhenvald 2018; Eberhard 2018; Hintz and Hintz 2017; Kittilä 2019)



Data

➤ *COCA*

*a*_n BE a*_n*

➤ *Web-based sources*

Messi is Messi

THE CORPUS OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ENGLISH (COCA)

450 MILLION WORDS, 1990-2012





Results

- *Nominal tautologies share the features attested in the literature for general knowledge evidentials (reliability, non-concreteness, involvement of several participants, diversity) and exhibit similar functions.*
 - *NT are used as a justification for some fact, opinion or behaviour.*
 - *NT give rise to an array of enriched interpretations generated through conversational implicatures.*
 - *NT force the hearer to take responsibility for maintaining solidarity and togetherness.*
 - *NT evoke different types of general knowledge.*



Reliability I

➤ *Nominal tautologies are used as a justification for some fact, opinion or behaviour.*

(1) *Johnny Depp has been melting women's hearts for almost 40 years. Women forgive him everything they usually don't like in a man. Alcohol. Mumbling. Silver teeth. Yes, even his torn jackets. Why? Because Johnny Depp is Johnny Depp.*

(<https://www.adam-themagazine.com/en/johnny-depp/>, 28.04.2020)



Reliability II

➤ *Nominal tautologies are used as a justification for some fact, opinion or behaviour.*

(2) *Because Rowling is Rowling – i.e., the author of one of the most consistently successful books-to-film phenomena this side of James Bond – she gets away with a lot on her first run as a screenwriter.”*

(https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/arts/film/72073/film_review_fantastic_beasts_and_where_to_find_them_beast_of_a_blockbuster_done_right, 28.04.2020)



Non-concreteness I

- *NT give rise to an array of enriched interpretations generated through conversational implicatures.*

- (3) *Mr. COBB: ... I seem to be doing, you know, is – is really making it go. And – and it is more about, you know, the romance of two people, any two people, you know, which transcends race, which tran – transcends religion. They are totally disparate in type and size and colour and attitude and everything, but yet, love is love, you know? (COCA, SPOK CBS_Morning, 04.03.1996)*

- *Love overcomes differences in nationality and background.*



Non-concreteness II

- *NT give rise to an array of enriched interpretations generated through conversational implicatures.*
- (4) *Mick JAGGER: (Singing) I want to tell you how it's gonna be. And you're gonna give your love to me. I'm gonna love you night and day, 'cause love is love and not fade away. Well, love is love and not fade away. (COCA, SPOK: NPR_FreshAir, 11.06. 2002)*
- *Love is time-resistant.*



Non-concreteness III

- *NT give rise to an array of enriched interpretations generated through conversational implicatures.*

- (5) *“Would you call the sitter, see if he’s okay?” Susan asked. “We just left him five minutes ago,” I pleaded over the glasses of wine we hadn’t yet tasted. “I’m sure he’s fine.” “But I miss him,” Susan said. I knew there was no reasoning with that. Love is love. Soon after our entrees arrived, she confessed that she wanted to get home to tuck him in. (COCA, MAG: Redbook, 2004)*

- *Love leads to a lack of reasoning.*



Involvement of several participants I

- *An English nominal tautology signals that the speaker intends that the hearer recognize:*
 - i) that the speaker holds some view towards all objects referenced by the NP;*
 - ii) that the speaker believes that the hearer can recognize this particular view;*
 - iii) that this view is relevant to the conversation.*

(Fraser 1988; Miki 1996)



Involvement of several participants II

(6) *“It’s your fault, Mr. Platt,” said his wife, when she got him by himself. “You’ve taken the heart out of him. He’s not telling his tales the way he did. You should be ashamed of yourself.” “What? For telling him he’s a liar?” said her husband. “No gentleman would do such a thing,” replied his wife. “A liar’s a liar,” said Mr. Platt. “And a gentleman is a gentleman and wouldn’t say so,” said his wife in unaccustomed rebellion. (COCA, Prevarication Jones, FIC: Saturday Evening Post, 1994)*



Diversity I

- *Nominal tautologies evoke different types of general knowledge.*
 - *Knowledge about the world (encyclopaedic) vs. knowledge about language (metalinguistic)*
 - *Normative vs. descriptive knowledge*
 - *Common vs. local knowledge*

(Vilinbakhova & Escandell-Vidal 2020)



Diversity II

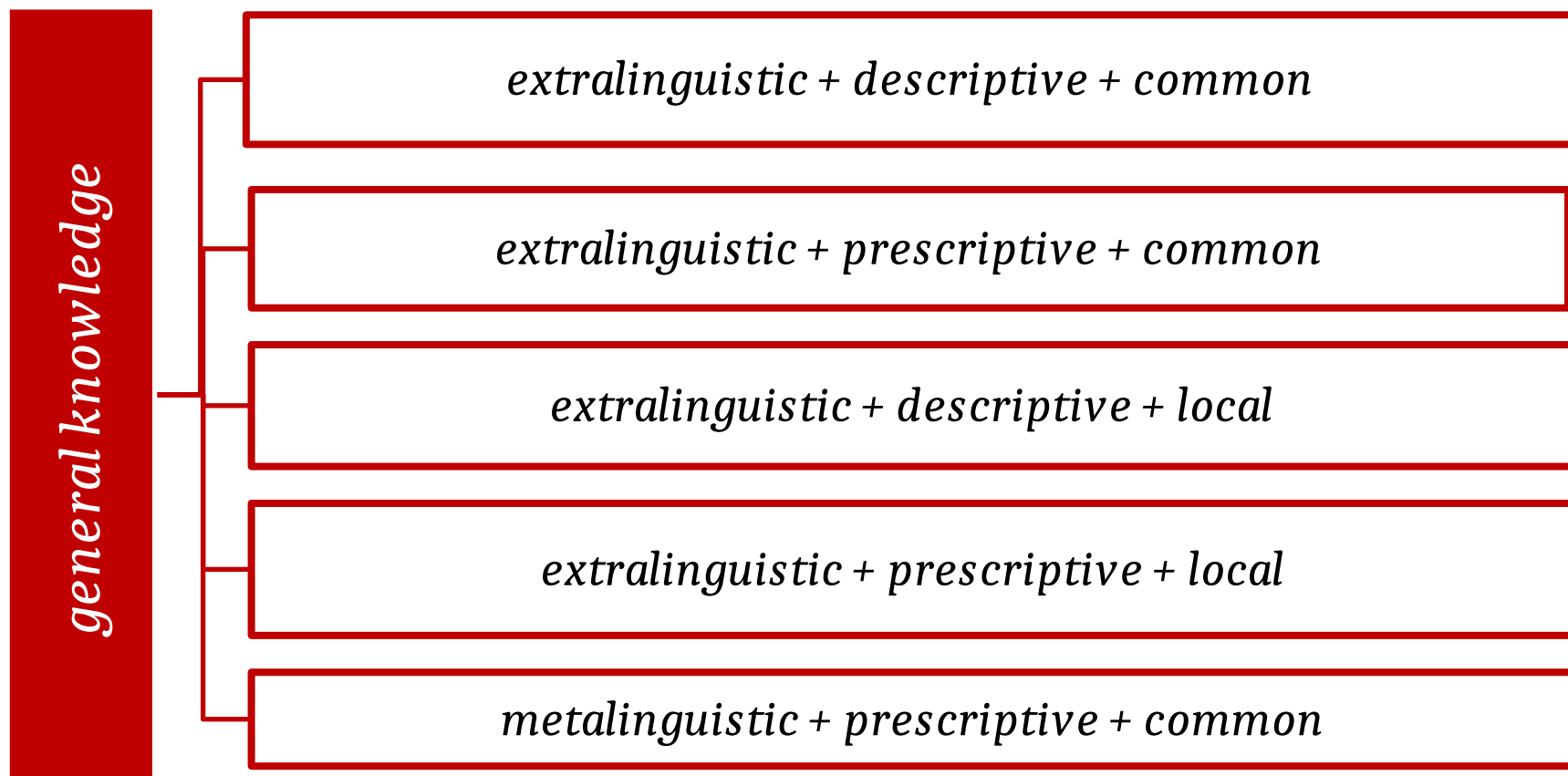


Fig. 3. Types of general knowledge in tautologies. (Vilinbakhova & Escandell-Vidal 2020)



Diversity III

- (7) *Simmons, however, said I was “delusional” to ask about their frictional recent history on Wednesday. “Do you ever argue and scream at family members?” he said. “It’s called family biz. Family is family, and you go through all kinds of things, and if that’s news to you then you’re being delusional. You disagree with your mom and your dad and other family members.” (COCA, NEWS: Minneapolis Star Tribune, 20.09.2017) – inductive generalization*
- (8) *Billy gathered up the wrapping paper and put his coat carefully back into the box. “Didn’t mean to make such a mess,” he said. “I do wish I could stay.” “No problem at all, Billy,” Cecil said. “Family is family.” Billy wished them a merry Christmas, and Skye reminded Ross to stir the gravy. Ross and Cecil watched them drive into the night (COCA, Smith Jamie Lyn, FIC: Kenyon Review Jul/Aug 2015) – social rule*



Diversity IV

- (9) *Always before, it took something the calibre of getting tromped beneath a bucking horse to lay Charlie Doig out. But this ulcer deal... how could a gastric squall put my whangleather father on the couch, sick as a poisoned pup? My father being my father, he tensely urges my mother to relax, will she, about the situation. (COCA, Ivan Doig, FIC: Heart Earth, 1993) – local inductive generalization*
- (10) *“When you are not working or sleeping, do you stay inside?” “No,” he says. “Why let it stand empty? I need somewhere to work.” “Let me think about this,” he says. “Of course,” she says, “but if you agree, you must never encroach on my time. Ever. My time is my time.” “This might work,” he says. (COCA, Whitney Otto, FIC: The Passion Dream Book, 1997) – local rule*



Diversity V

(11) *“Speaking of problems leads me to ask, what do you know of problem solving in general?” Grama asked. “A teacher of mine always tells us there are no problems. We should call them challenges,” Susan answered. “Oh, poppycock!” Grama snorted irritably. “That idea comes from the silly notion that if you merely use positive words in your vocabulary you will find positive, creative solutions. [...] I prefer not to play that kind of word-game. A problem is a problem. Just that. A problem, like in mathematics, is a question that demands a solution. And by definition, it insists that a solution does exist. I believe it is more important to work on your inner belief and attitude toward problems, than to mindlessly change a word in your vocabulary because it’s popular to do so.” (COCA, Aliske Webb, FIC: Twelve Golden Threads, 1992) – **linguistic definition***



Implications for previous theories II

- *In the literature it is argued that the main function of tautologies is the evocation of a property without its explicit mention to avoid possible disagreement.*

(Fraser 1988; Miki 1996)



Implications for previous theories II

- *In the literature it is argued that the main function of tautologies is the evocation of a property without its explicit mention to avoid possible disagreement.*
- *However, in the naturally occurring data repetitions are frequently encountered together with the overt verbalizations of the conveyed claim.*

(Fraser 1988; Miki 1996)



Implications for previous theories III

(12) Obviously, Boris Johnson is Boris Johnson – an overgrown child who delivers speeches about tax cuts like he's doing improv comedy at a school assembly – and that is inherently repellant.

(https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/439dyd/thank-god-the-uks-sexiest-politicians-list-is-here)



Implications for previous theories IV

- *If tautologies are regarded as general knowledge evidentials, their role is to mark the veracity of the statement in a discourse fragment which falls under their scope, and co-occurring explicit statements are fully justified.*



Conclusions

- *Repetitions, such as nominal tautologies, represent an evidential strategy in English, which lacks evidential paradigms.*
- *Nominal tautologies share the features attested in the literature for general knowledge evidentials, including reliability, non-concreteness, involvement of several participants, diversity.*
- *The proposed analysis justifies their co-occurrence with explicitly conveyed messages, which remains unexplained by previous accounts.*



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Thank you!
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