

Denis BERTET — BLS44, UC Berkeley — February 9, 2018

When only nominals are marked for tense

The case of Ticuna (isolate, Western Amazonia)



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Objective

Describe some features of a semantic category (Tense) encoded by the grammar of a Ticuna variety:

- ❖ morphosyntax of exponents
- ❖ syntactic scope
- ❖ semantic content

Claims

The language's grammar displays a Tense category:

- ❖ whose main exponents are syntactically part of NPs
- ❖ whose scope is limited to NPs (NOT entire clauses)
- ❖ which truly is tense (NOT aspect)

=> case of nominal tense in the narrow sense

- 1. Introduction to language and data**
- 2. Relevant typological information**
- 3. Exponents of Tense**
- 4. Syntactic scope of Tense is NP**
- 5. Tense is not aspectual**
- 6. Conclusions**



Language

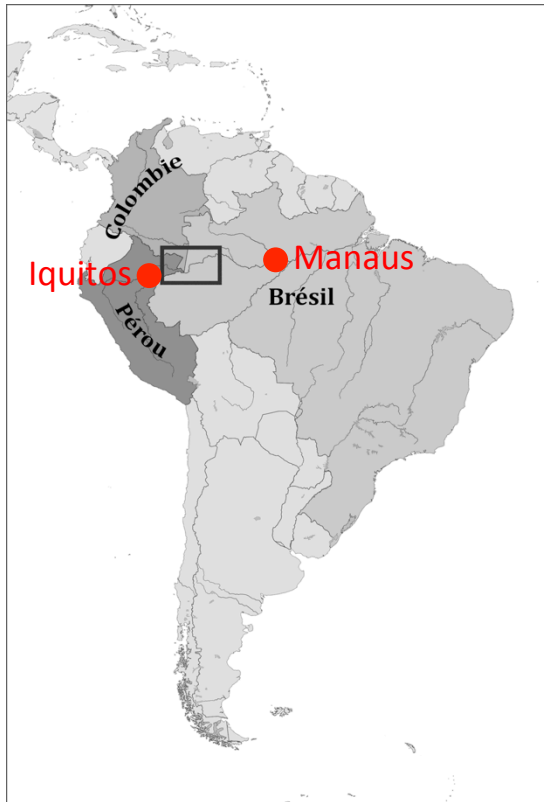
Ticuna \approx 50,000~60,000 speakers (Peru, Colombia, Brazil), vital as a whole

SMA Ticuna \approx 550 speakers

Isolate (or Yuri-Ticuna?: Carvalho 2009, Goulard & Montes 2013)



Language



Goulard (2009)



Data

Fieldwork (2015-2017, PhD project, supervisor: Antoine GUILLAUME, DDL research center & Université Lumière–Lyon 2, ASLAN Labex)

San Martín de Amacayacu (SMA) Ticuna

Mostly elicitation with Javier Sánchez Gregorio (♂34 y.o.) and Loida Ángel Ruiz (♀50 y.o.) (extrapolated from spontaneous uses, strongly contextualized and double-checked)

Lesser use of spontaneous/staged data (corpus ≈ 20,000 words)
=> preliminary





Phonology

Relatively simple segmental inventory and syllable structure ($\approx/(C)V(?)$)

Highly tonal (rich toneme inventory + toneme alternations for morphosyntactic purposes)

N.B.: practical orthography in this talk (\Rightarrow no claims as to phonology, but all contrasts maintained)

Relatively straightforward, but please note:

$x`$ low toneme x' high toneme



Morphosyntax

Mostly agglutinative (morpheme boundaries often correspond to syllable boundaries)

5 agreement classes (C1-C5, ≈genders) in nominals: at least partially lexical property; agreement within NP + in 3rd person indexing on predicative head

Morphosyntax

No clear-cut basic word order

(ADJUNCT) ARG ARG SBJ=PRED
S O V

(ADJUNCT) SBJ=OBJ=PRED **CON** ARG **CON** ARG (CON ADJUNCT)
V S O
V O S



(ADJUNCT) ARG SBJ=OBJ=PRED **CON** ARG
S V O

(ADJUNCT) ARG SBJ=PRED **CON** ARG
O V S

**Arg's/adjuncts that follow
 predicative head require
 "CONNECTORS"**

(only *OSV)

Morphosyntax

Basic word order within NP is somewhat similar:

ADNOMINAL	HEAD	CON	ADNOMINAL
GP			GP
deictics			embedded clauses
indef. article			apposition

**Adnominals that follow
NP's head require
"CONNECTORS"**



Main exponents of Tense

Belong syntactically to NPs:

Anaphorics, both non locative and locative (“there”) ones

Connectors

⇒ two series of forms for each: one series has UNSPECIFIED(.TENSE) value, the other series is marked for PAST(.TENSE)

In this talk focus on cases where exponents of Tense are connectors only



Connectors: paradigm

	UNSPECIFIED	PAST
C1	ì	gá
C2	í	gá (~gà)*
C3/4	yá (~yà)*	gá (~gà)*
C5	yá	gá

**Variant found in older speakers.*

Syntactic scope of Tense

In most contexts, all connectors in a clause have the same Tense value and selecting their PAST form triggers a past temporal reading of the whole clause:

(1)

Námá'ā chāyàrū-ú gá curaca.

<i>ná-má'a</i>	<i>chā=yà=rū=ú</i>	<i>gá</i>	<i>curaca</i> (Sp.)
3C1/3-COM	1SG=ASS.MOV=PRED.CL=to.go	CON.C1/2/3/4/5.PAST	community.leader

'I met the community leader.'

Syntactic scope of Tense

In examples (2-4) however, the temporal interpretation of the whole clause is *non-past*, while one argument's connector is marked as PAST:

(2)

Nǎgú íchārũ-ĩnũ gá chô'rũ pāpá.

nǎ-gú í=chā=rũ=ĩnũ gá chô-'rũ pāpá

3C5-LOC PROG=1SG=PRED.CL=to.think CON.C1/2/3/4/5.PAST 1SG-GEN father.C5

'[What are you thinking about? –] I am recalling my (deceased) father.'

Syntactic scope of Tense

(3)

Kû'ũ tá chāyà-wẹ gá chòpátā yá tâ'ũnè.

kû-'ũ	tá	chā=yà=wẹ		gá		chò=pátā
2SG-ACC	FUT	1SG=PRED.CL.3C1/3/5.OBJ=to.show	CON.C1/2/3/4/5.PAST	1SG-building.C3		
yá		tâ-'ũnè				
CON.C3/4/5		to.be.big-NMLZ.C3				

'I will show you my (former) big house [which is Juan's now, but is still big].'

Syntactic scope of Tense

(4)

Ñumá wâ'í mārū nǎchí'ũgú nárū-ǎu gá fènēèkū.

ñumá	wâ'í	mārū	nǎ-chí'ũ-gú	ná=rū=ǎu
present.time	CONTR	PFV	3C5-home-LOC	3C1/3/5=PRED.CL=to.stay
gá		fènēè-kū		
CON.C1/2/3/4/5.PAST		to.hunt-NMLZ.C5		

'But now the (former) hunter stays at home [as there is no more game in the jungle].'

Syntactic scope of Tense

⇒ the value of Tense in NPs and the temporal interpretation of the clause they belong to are **in themselves independent** (although there is a tendency towards past temporal interpretation of clauses that contain NPs with a PAST connector)

⇒ “*independent nominal tense*”, “*in which the nominal itself is temporally situated independently of the proposition as a whole*” (Nordlinger & Sadler 2004:801)

≠ from more tense-agreement-like marking of NPs



Syntactic scope of Tense

Depending on several factors, different features of the referent of the NP may be situated in the past: its very existence (ex. 2):

(2)

Nǎgú íchārũ-ĩnũ gá chô'rũ pāpá.

naǎ-gú í=chā=rũ=ĩnũ **gá** chô-'rũ pāpá'

3C5-LOC PROG=1SG=PRED.CL=to.think **CON.C1/2/3/4/5.PAST** 1SG-GEN father.C5

'[What are you thinking about? –] I am recalling my (deceased) father.'

Syntactic scope of Tense

Depending on several factors, different features of the referent of the NP may be situated in the past: its very existence (ex. 2), its belonging to someone (3):

(3)

Kû'ũ tá chāyà-wẹ gá chòpátā yá tâ'ũnè.

kû-'ũ	tá	chā=yà=wẹ		gá		chò=pátā
2SG-ACC	FUT	1SG=PRED.CL.3C1/3/5.OBJ=to.show			CON.C1/2/3/4/5.PAST	1SG-
building.C3						
yá		tâ-'ũnè				
CON.C3/4/5		to.be.big-NMLZ.C3				

'I will show you my (former) big house [which is Juan's now, but is still big].'

Syntactic scope of Tense

Depending on several factors, different features of the referent of the NP may be situated in the past: its very existence (ex. 2), its belonging to someone (3), one of its properties (4):

(4)

Ñumá wâ'í mārū năchí'ũgú nárū-ǎu gá fènēèkū.

ñumá	wâ'í	mārū	nă-chí'ũ-gú	ná=rū=ǎu
present.time	CONTR	PFV	3C5-home-LOC	3C1/3/5=PRED.CL=to.stay
gá		fènēè-kū		
CON.C1/2/3/4/5.PAST		to.hunt-NMLZ.C5		

'But now the (former) hunter stays at home [as there is no more game in the jungle].'



Syntactic scope of Tense

Depending on several factors, different features of the referent of the NP may be situated in the past: its very existence (ex. 2), its belonging to someone (3), one of its properties (4), etc.



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Conflict between Tense value of NPs and temporal reading of whole clause yields interesting meaning effects: death of referent (2), loss of ownership (3), end of activity (4), etc.



Syntactic scope of Tense

In (1), it can be argued that it is only the *role* of the referent of the NP in the state of things referred to by the whole clause that is situated in the past, which *secondarily* requires a past time interpretation for the whole clause

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'I met the community leader.'



Semantic content of Tense

Example (1) again shows that the SMAT category of Tense is not aspectual (as so-called “nominal tense” in several languages, such as Tupinambá and Paraguayan Guarani): at event time the person met still is the community leader

(1)

Námá'ā chāyàrũ-ũ gá curaca.

ná-má'a	chā=yà=rũ=ũ	gá	<i>curaca</i> (Sp.)
3C1/3-COM	1SG=ASS.MOV=PRED.CL=to.go	CON.C1/2/3/4/5.PAST	community.leader

‘I met the community leader.’



Semantic content of Tense

Some cases of modal interpretation of PAST Tense as irrealis:

(5)

Ná-mũ chí gá chô'rũ pũrākú ì ñymá.

ná=mũ	chí	gá	chô'rũ	pũrākú	ì	ñymá
3C1/3/5-be.many	IRR	CON.C1/2/3/4/5.PAST	1SG-GEN	work	CON.C1	present.time

'I would have a lot work now [if I looked for it].'



Nominal tense in the narrow sense

Perhaps a true case of nominal tense as described in Tonhauser (2008:337-338)

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