Towards a unified analysis of nominal and sentential tense in Mbyá
Guillaume Thomas, MIT

A remarkable feature of the temporal system of Mbyá is the scarcity of tense morphology. Bare verbs are interpreted either in the past or in the present. Two temporal particles *-kue* and *-rã* are attested inside Noun Phrases (NPs) (see Tonhauser 2006, 2007). In addition, *-kue* and *-rã* are attested on nominalized sentential complements and relative clauses, and the complex morphemes *va'ekue* and *va'erã* may be used to express past and future tenses on matrix verbs. In Thomas (To appear), I argued that *-kue* and *-rã* are interpreted as relative past and future tenses in their sentential uses (on nominalized clauses and in matrix clauses). One challenge for this analysis is that there are constraints on the interpretation of *-kue* and *-rã* inside NPs that do not apply to the sentential uses of these particles. For instance (1) licenses the inference that João is not Marco's friend at the utterance time. This property has been dubbed the *change of state property* by Tonhauser (2007). In addition, (1) conveys that Marco's or João were still alive at the time when they stopped being friends. This is what Tonhauser (2007) calls the *existence property*. In these respects, (1) contrasts with (2), which does not have these properties.

(1) João ma   Marco i-rũ-kue
     João TOP Marco B3-friend-KUE
     'João is Marco's former-friend'

(2) João ma   o-iko va'e-kue   Marco i-rũ
     João TOP A3-be REL-KUE Marco B3-friend
     'João was Marco's friend'

I argue that these additional inferences are due to the interaction of the semantics of *-kue* and *-rã* with general constraints on the temporal interpretation of NPs. The change of state property arises in (1) because this sentence triggers an obligatory implicature that Juan is not a chief at the utterance time. Clausal uses of *-kue/-rã* trigger this implicature too, but in this case the implicature can be canceled. Explaining why the implicature triggered by the past and future tenses is obligatory inside NPs is the main challenge of this project and will be the focus of this talk. The existence property is derived by assuming that a silent operator is present inside NPs, that conveys that the evaluation time of NPs is a subset of the life time of their individual argument. Crucially, this operator out-scopes the tense *-kue/-rã* in its nominal uses, while it occurs in the scope of *-kue* in its clausal uses. The existence property and its absence are predicted as a consequence of these different scope options.

In this talk, I will focus on deriving the change of state property for *-kue*.

References

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