

#13

ETHNOLOGICA (Continued)
Departamento de Lingüística
Universidad de los Andes

unic

NOTES AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM READERS

More on Positionals Outside Siouan

Francisco Queixalós, C.N.R.S., Paris

Ken Miner recently published, in Siouan and Caddoan Linguistics 3, 1980, a note about so-called verbal positionals. As a contribution to the knowledge of this phenomenon I will briefly present the case of the Sikuani language (Guahibo) spoken in the savanna area of the Orinoco Basin (western Venezuela).

This language shows a paradigm of four verbs whose roots are E-, 'sit', NU-, 'stand', EO-, 'lie', RU-, 'be suspended, hang' (the capitals are merely notational).

Sikuani verbs are always accompanied by a modal morpheme which allows the actual/virtual contrast. The verbal roots are classified in about ten groups in accordance with the actual/virtual modal pair they select, e.g. RAHU- $\begin{Bmatrix} ta \\ tsi \end{Bmatrix}$, 'give', U- $\begin{Bmatrix} ba \\ bi \end{Bmatrix}$, 'sow', PITSA- $\begin{Bmatrix} pa \\ pae \end{Bmatrix}$, 'go out', TAI- $\begin{Bmatrix} ka \\ kae \end{Bmatrix}$, 'seize', HI- $\begin{Bmatrix} na \\ nae \end{Bmatrix}$, 'hunt', etc. This selection is basically arbitrary.

Yet we can notice a clear affinity between the -ta/-tsi group and transitive roots. Generally one root belongs to only one verbal group; for instance U- can only be associated with -ba/-bi, PITSA- with -pa/-pae, etc.

The class of positional verbs (PV) is characterized by a set of special properties. (Most of these properties are not, when considered apart, exclusive to this class, but their combination makes this class a unique entity in Sikuani grammar).

1. A small number of roots have the possibility of choosing between two modal pairs. Then, more often than not, we get two verbs constructed from the same root: one will be intransitive, the other transitive. For instance SUKUE-na, 'be soaked' vs. SUKUE-ta, 'soak'. It should be observed that a transitive verb is not necessarily indicated by -ta: ISI-ka, 'unfasten oneself' vs. ISI-na, 'unfasten'.

A PV connected to the modal pair -ka/-kae is intransitive, e.g. Kopipito NU-ka, 'K. is standing'. The PV class may undergo a causative transformation by its association with -ta/-tae, e.g. Kopipito Yokopi NU-ta, 'Kopipito makes Yokopi stand up' (there is no nom./acc. case marking; the usual order is (SOV), whereas causation is obtained periphrastically for all other verbs by means of EXA-na, 'make', K. PITSA-pa, 'K. goes out', K. PITSA-pa-EXA-na, 'K. makes Y. go out'.

2. Verbs which are Verb-Verb compounds are fairly numerous. Apart from a

few auxiliary constructions - aspectual (start V-ing, finish V-ing), modal (want to) or causative (cf. 1.) - these constructions are lexicalized, e.g. PA-ta-HO-pa, 'arrive suddenly' (from PA-ta, 'arrive' and HO-pa, 'fall').

On the other hand, the Verb-PV construction is a grammatical device in wide use. The verbs which are particularly prone to use as an auxiliary with PV are those related to spatially stationary actions. For instance, the most usual way to say 'sleep' is MAHI-ta-RU-ka, 'sleep in a hanging position' (the hammock is a dominant feature in the material culture of this area...).

Among the four PV verbs, E-, 'sit', has developed in a particular way, for, besides its primary reference to position, the verb may simply have the meaning of durative aspect. For example, K. PAE-ba-E-ka, 'K. has been telling stories for a long time (without any emphasis on his position)' and even K. NU-ka-E-ka, 'K. has been standing for a long time'.

3. In Transitive Verb-PV constructions, the possibility for PV to undergo the causative transformation described in 1. allows PV orientation switching. Verb-PVka (i.e. Verb-Intransitive PV) specifies the position of the subject. With NAKO-ta, 'watch': K. Y. NAKO-ta-NU-ka, 'K. watches Y. (K. standing)', Verb-PVta specifies the position of the object: K. Y. NAKO-ta-NU-ta, 'K. watches Y. (Y. standing)'. For additional details and examples, see Queixalós 1979.

4. The PV verbs are the only ones subject to agreement in number other than through its normal expression in the personal pronouns. For PVka, E-, 'sit', again has a special status: The plural of E-ka is E-na, i.e. the verb changes verb group. E.g. hiwi E-na, 'people are sitting'; the plural of other PVs is indicated by 1) A change of verbal group, from PVka to PVba, 2) An auxiliarization by means of E-na; e.g. hiwi RU-ba-E-na, 'the people are in a hanging position' (in their hammocks, for instance). For PVta, it is the change of verbal group to that of PVba which indicates the plural. Thus:

	intransitive		transitive	
	sing.	plur.	sing.	plur.
'sit'	E-ka	E-na	E-ta	E-ba
'stand'	NU-ka	NU-ba-E-na	NU-ta	NU-ba
'lie'	BO-ka	BO-ba-E-na	BO-ta	BO-ba
'hang'	RU-ka	RU-ba-E-na	RU-ta	RU-ba

(Two suppletive forms have been omitted: E-ba stands for HE-ba, BO-ta stands for BUA-ta).

It is worth noting that the language requires agreement in number to be congruent with the vision orientation mentioned in 3. The number of intransitive PVs agrees with the subject, whereas the number of transitive PVs agrees with the object. Therefore: K. Y. NU-ta, 'K. makes Y. stand up', but K. hiwi NU-ba, 'K. makes people stand up'; and:

NAKO-ta-NU-ka	'observe (one observer standing)'
NAKO-ta-NU-ba-E-na	'observe (several observers standing)'
NAKO-ta-NU-ta	'observe (one observed standing)'
NAKO-ta-NU-ba	'observe (several observed standing)'

5. The reduplication of the root is a derivational means certain verbs have adopted to create intensive counterparts. These derivative forms have been lexicalized to a large extent and we can assume that some have discarded their primitive counterpart.

For the PVka, this device is in current use in order to intensify the durative aspect of the action referred to: E.g. E-E-ka, 'sit still a long time'. As far as we know, the NU-NU-ka and the NU-ka-E-ka types (cf. 2.) are semantically equivalent. (It would be worth examining the constraints which may be imposed on the expression of the durative aspect in the Verb-PVta constructions mentioned in 3.).

June, 1980.

References

Queixalós, F., 1979, 'L'arbre à nourriture, mythe sikuani sur l'origine de l'agriculture', Amerindia 4.

COMMENT ON CHARNEY'S "STYLE IN WINNEBAGO NARRATIVES", SCL 3

Ken Miner, University of Kansas

Charney's conclusions regarding the tendency of modern Winnebago narratives to dispense with the older "heaping up of conjunction-connectives" accord well with my own experiences in the Wisconsin Native American Languages Project. In 1974, Prof. Jeanette Harries, then with the Linguistics Department of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, taped a number of texts from John Greengrass, an elderly speaker then living in Madison, and deposited them with the State Historical Society. The following year one of my regular consultants, Lavina Thorud, a "modern" speaker, went through some of them with me and helped me obtain written versions. She insisted on editing out the extremely profuse repetitions of conjunction-connectives.

Mr. Greengrass was also in the habit of repeating, at the beginning of a new sentence, the main clause of the last one in the form of a temporal expression: "She entered the house quickly. When she entered the house, she saw her husband sleeping. When she saw her husband sleeping..." Mary Haas once remarked to me that repetition and redundancy were characteristic of archaic narrative style also in languages with which she was familiar.

Another elderly Winnebago speaker, Martin Lowe of Black River Falls, Wisconsin, whom I visited but who did not wish to give me any texts, did allow Mrs. Thorud to tape some, and they also showed what from Mrs. Thorud's point of view were "too many *žeeǵǵ*, *žeeǵǵ heegǵ*, *žeeǵǵ*" and so on. I distinctly received the impression that this was common among the conservative story-tellers, but not among those who had grown up in different environments.