The parallel between verbs and nouns in the Tenetehára language
(Tupí-Guaraní family)

1. INTRODUCTION: Linguistic tradition points to the fact that tense, aspect, agreement and causative morphology are usually properties of verbal structures and not categories of nominal constructions. However, a range of languages also encode some of these properties at the nominal level. For example, Hocket (1958) provides data from the Potawatomi language in which the same markers encode time in both verbs and nouns. In line with this, we aim to demonstrate that D/NPs and vPs may project identical functional categories such as tense, negation, causation, signaling that there there is a certain parallelism between verbs and nouns in Tenetehára. For instance, both future and past tense morphology can appear in noun phrases and in verbal sentences. However, it is important to point out that there is not always a one to one relationship between the time of the verbal predication and the time of the noun phrase. The following examples demonstrate this claim.

(1)  
a’e-ae u-mu-me’u-putar  
he-ENF 3-CAUS-tell-FUT 3-NOML-do-PAST 3 INTEN
“He himself will tell all that was done by him.”

The example above is very interesting in that it clearly shows that there is a tense mismatch between the verbal predicate and the nominalized predicate. This is confirmed by the fact that the verb triggers the future tense suffix {-putar}, whereas the nominalized structure receives the past tense morpheme {-kwer}. Thus, in this example, there is a disjunction between the tense of the noun phrase and that of the verbal phrase.

2. HYPOTHESIS: The above data reinforces the hypothesis that tense in nominalized phrases, at least in Tenetehára, is realized independently of the encoded tense in the matrix clause. Thus, this temporal disjunction, seen in (1), supports the initial assumption that, just like verbs, nouns also project a functional category able to encoding tense. It is noteworthy that the literature on the temporal interpretation in natural languages focused mainly on the time frame of the verbal predicates. We put forth a hypothesis in which the main reason for this is that European languages have a wealth of time counters only in verbs, but not in nouns. However, as demonstrated above, the DPs can also be interpreted in terms of temporality. So a central question that arises for our analysis is how this temporality is encoded in noun phrases. As shown above, the nominal morphemes for tense, in fact, contribute in some way with the location of a nominalized event on the time axis, as well as how the event described by the verbal predicates is identified. Given the works of Smith (1991), Kamp & Reyle (1993) and Klein (1994), we assume henceforth that the tense markers do have the function of encoding the relationship between the reference tense and the tense of the utterance (time of speaking). This tense thread is particularly evidenced by the examples below.

(2)  
a-exak he=r-ápuz-kwer iko ihe
1SG-see 1SG=REL-house-PAST AUX 1SG
“I’m seeing the house that used to be mine”
b. \textit{a-exak he=\textit{r-âpuz-râm} \textit{iko ihe}}
\[1SG\text{-see} \quad 1SG=\text{REL-house-FUT} \quad AUX \quad 1SG\]
\[\text{“I am seeing the house that will be mine”}\]

Note that the last tense morpheme \{-kwer\} in (2a) establishes a link between the time of the noun phrase \textit{he=\textit{r-âpuz-kwer}} “the house that was mine” to the time of the utterance and not to the time of the verbal predication. What we’re assuming is that the speaker is seeing a house that he or she had at a time that was earlier than the speech time. At the same time, note that in (2b) the morpheme of future tense \{-\text{râm}\} connects the time of the noun phrase to the time of the utterance. Note that what is at stake in the sentences above is the time of house ownership and not the time of the object alone (i.e. whether it is a house or if it was a house). The morphemes of nominal time establish a close relationship between the time of the noun phrase and the time of utterance, which in accordance to Smith’s (1991), Kamp & Reyle’s (1993) and Klein’s (1994) theories. It is noteworthy, however, that this proposal goes against other current assumptions that are available in the linguistic literature such as that of Tonhauser (2002, 2006, 2007) and of Matthewson (2005), which propose that the projection of the noun phrase never encodes tense.

3. \textbf{PROPOSAL:} In sum, our proposal is that the Tenetehárá language (Tupí-Guarani) projects verbal properties in nominal and nominalized structures, which reveal a certain parallelism between verbs and nouns in the language. Based on this hypothesis, we advocate the theoretical theory according to which the noun phrases, similar to verbal predicates, do receive functional morphologies able to encode categories of time.

\textbf{Bibliographical References}


