Revisiting nominal tense
Guillaume Thomas

Tonhauser (2007) and Thomas (2012) have analyzed the temporal marker -kue in Paraguayan Guarani and in Mbya Guarani as a piece of nominal inflection. Tonhauser (2007) focuses on uses of -kue on lexical nouns, as illustrated in (1), and proposed that -kue is a form of perfect aspect. By contrast, Thomas (2012) proposes an analysis of -kue as relative past tense that also accounts for its propositional uses, in which -kue is affixed to a nominalized proposition, as illustrated in (2):

(1) A-echa mburuvicha-kue.
   A1.SG-see leader-KUE
   ‘I saw the ex-chief.’

(2) Juan o-icha’ã María o-amba’apo-a-gue.
   Juan A3-think María A3-work-NMLZ-KUE
   ‘Juan thinks/thought that Maria was working.’

Both analyses have ignored a less frequent use of -kue that challenges its categorization as a nominal suffix. Indeed, -kue is also attested on stative and anti-causative predicates, with a variety of semantic effects that Dooley (2006) describes as ‘reducing dynamicity.’ In example (3), -kue turns the stage level stative predicate poriau (‘to be poor’) into an individual level predicate. In example and (4), -kue turns the anticausative predicate piru (‘to dry’) into an resultative modifier:

(3) Ha’e va’e je i-poriau-kue porã-‘i nho.
   ANA REL EVID B3-sad-kue good-DIM however
   However, he was very sad. (Florentino 1977b)

(4) Peteï Paraguai o-me’ë vaka r-o’o-kue piru-kue.
   one Paraguayan A3-give cow REL-meet-KUE dry-kue
   ‘A Paraguayan gave me dried meat.’ (Florentino 1977a)

In this talk, I will discuss the categorization of these predicates, and I will argue that while predicates like poriaukue in (3) are better analyzed as verbs, predicates like pirukue in (4) are best analyzed as adjectives. I will then consider the implications of these data for the analysis of nominal tense in Mbya, focusing on two questions:

1. In the face of these apparent counter-examples, can we maintain the generalization that temporal markers in Mbya are nominal?

2. Can we extend the analysis of -kue as a relative past tense to its uses in (3) and (4), or should we posit that -kue is ambiguous between a tense and a marker of ‘reduced dynamicity’?
References


