

# Nominal Tense Handout

## 1 Pseudo-nominal tense

- [1] TAM encoded on nominal predicates in verb-less clauses
- [i] This is the nominal equivalent of verb tense marking on verbal predicates.
  - [ii] Bininj Gun-wok  
*mayh na-mekke nakka bininj-ni*  
bird MASC-DEM MASC.DEM human-PST  
'Those birds, they were human then.' (Evans 2003)
  - [iii] Turkish  
*Öğretmen-di-m*  
teacher-PST-1S  
'I was a teacher.'
- [2] TAM clitics phonologically attached to nominal constituents
- [i] By definition, these elements are syntactically and morphologically independent, i.e. they are syntactic elements, not inflections
  - [ii] English
    - [a] John'**ll** be back later.
    - [b] The man'**ll** be back later.
    - [c] He'**ll** be back later.
    - [d] The guy I went to school with'**ll** be back later.
    - [e] The guy I know'**ll** be back later.
- [3] Vestiges of verbal TAM marking retained in deverbal nominalizations
- [i] Polish 'to read'
    - [a] *czytać* (imperfective) / *przeczytać* (perfective)
    - [b] *czytanie* / *przeczytanie* = "the reading"
    - [c] Eng. "The **reading** of the book gave me much pleasure."
      - [1] *czytanie* = the process of reading
      - [2] *przeczytanie* = the totality of the act of reading
    - [d] Aspect is clearly an inflectional category of the verb, not the nominal word class.

## 2 Core cases of nominal TAM

- [4] Core cases of nominal TAM share (at least) the following characteristics:
- [i] Nouns (or other NP/DP constituents) show a distinction in one or more of the categories of tense, aspect, and mood, where these categories are standardly defined as they would be for verbs.
  - [ii] This TAM distinction is productive across the whole word class and not simply restricted to a small subset of forms.
  - [iii] The TAM distinction is not restricted to nominals functioning in predicates of verb-less clauses but is encoded on arguments and/or adjunct NP/DPs in clauses headed by verbs.
  - [iv] The TAM marker is a morphological category of the nominal word class and cannot be treated as a syntactic clitic that merely attaches phonologically to the NP/DP.

## 3 Functions of nominal TAM

- [5] Independent nominal TAM
- [i] Specifies information intrinsic to the nominal itself
  - [ii] Independent of clause-level TAM
- [6] Propositional nominal TAM
- [i] Provides TAM information for the whole proposition
  - [ii] Often (but not always) in conjunction with the TAM of the verb

## 4 Independent nominal tense

- [7] Verbal & nominal TAM marking identical (Potawatomi)
- [i] *nkəšatəs*  
'I am happy' (verb)
  - [ii] *nkəšatsəpən*  
'I was formerly happy (but not now)'
  - [iii] *nčiman*  
'my canoe' (noun)

- [iv] *nčimanpən*  
 ‘my former canoe, now lost, destroyed, or stolen’

[8] Verbal & nominal TAM marking distinct (Tariana)

[i] Nominal TAM marking

- [a] Future tense: *-pena*  
*pi-ya-dapana-pena*  
 2S-POSS-house-FUT  
 ‘your future house’
- [b] Past tense, masculine singular: *-miki-ri*  
*correio-miki-ri*  
 post.office-PST-NF  
 ‘old/former post office’
- [c] Past tense, feminine singular: *-miki-ru*  
*du-sa-do-miki-ru*  
 3S.NF-spouse-FEM-PST-FEM  
 ‘his late spouse’
- [d] Past tense, plural: *-miki*

[ii] Nominal TAM marking in verbal clauses

- [a] *thepi di-mare=pidana eta-miki-ri-nuku*  
 to.water 3S.NF-throw=RPR\* eagle-PST-NF-TOP  
 ‘He threw the remains of the eagle (lit. the ‘ex-eagle’, what used to be the eagle) into the water.’
- [b] *kayu-maka hĩ waripere unyane-pena di-kakwa=pidana*  
 so-AFF DEM Walipere flood-FUT 3S.NF-plan=RPR  
 ‘Thus Walipere was planning the future flood.’

\*remote past, reported

[9] Tense stacking in Tupinamba

- [i] *rók-a* ‘house’
- [ii] *rók-wér-a* ‘former house’
- [iii] *rók-wám-a* ‘future house’
- [iv] *rók-ám-wér-a* ‘what was to become a house (lit. ex-future house)’

## 5 Propositional nominal tense

[10] In conjunction with verbal TAM

- [i] Objects (and other non-subject dependents) in Lardil are inflected for one of three possible objective case markers depending on whether the verb is in the ‘general nonfuture,’ marked nonfuture, or the future tense.

[ii]	V TENSE	OBJ. CASE MARKER
	GNF	<i>-in</i>
	NFUT	<i>-arr</i>
	FUT	<i>-ur</i>

- [iii] *ngada niween maarn-in wu-tha*  
 1SG.NOM 3SG.OBJ spear-OBJ give-GNF  
 ‘I gave him a spear’
- [iv] *ngada niwentharr maarn-arr wu-tharr*  
 1SG.NOM 3SG.NFOBJ spear-NFOBJ give-NFUT  
 ‘I gave him a spear’
- [v] *ngada bilaa wu-thur ngimbentharr diin-kur wangalk-ur*  
 1SG.NOM tomorrow give-FUT 2SG.FOBJ this-FOBJ boomerang-FOBJ  
 ‘I’ll give you this boomerang tomorrow’

[11] As the sole exponent of TAM marking

- [i] In Sirionó, propositional temporal distinctions are expressed with a set of TAM suffixes, which can inflect nouns, adjectives, and verbs.
- [ii] *áe í osó-ke-rv*  
 he water go-PST-PERF  
 ‘He went to the water’
- [iii] *jǰkv-ke úke-rv*  
 tiger-PST sleep-PERF  
 ‘The tiger slept’
- [iv] *ési-ke óso ñá í-ra*  
 woman-PST go near water-to<sub>LOC</sub>  
 ‘The woman went near the water’
- [v] *ɛvgvtúŷ-rv háe bykiacáa*  
 tapir-PERF thing steal.not  
 ‘The tapir did not steal from others’
- [vi] *Kitóba eráo róo asęsiq-rv*  
 Cristobal he.carry meat Ascension-PERF  
 ‘Cristobal took meat to Ascension’

[12] Tense stacking in Guaraní

[i] *o-va-ta*            *che-róga-kue-pe*  
3-move-FUT<sub>V</sub>    1SG-house-PST<sub>N</sub>-in  
'He will move into my former house'

[ii] *a-va-va'ekue*      *hóga-rã-pe*  
1SG-move-PST<sub>V</sub>    3.house-FUT<sub>N</sub>-in  
'I have moved into his future house'

*che-róga-rã-ta*  
[iii] 1SG-house-FUT<sub>N</sub>-FUT<sub>V</sub>  
'It will be my future house'

## 6 Further implications

[13] With respect to independent nominal TAM, languages have been found that encode tense and/or mood, but no languages (as yet) which encode aspect.

[14] Nominal TAM marking poses an interesting puzzle concerning the diachronic processes (i.e. historical changes) leading to such varied and typologically unusual systems.

[15] Evidence of nominal TAM marking has implications for theories of word class categorization, which generally treat nouns as time-stable (as opposed to verbs).

[16] Tense, mood, and aspect must be recognized as possible inflectional categories for nouns (in addition to verbs), as well as possibly instantiating an agreement category.

[17] According to standard notions of headedness, clausal properties (including propositional TAM) must be associated with clausal heads (i.e. verbs and auxiliaries). Dependent nominals, especially subject nominals (which are outside of the VP), are not clausal heads and therefore (according to some formalisms) cannot encode clausal properties. Propositional nominal TAM marking therefore poses real challenges to these formal accounts.

## References

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