

03/06/2025

TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE TYPOLOGY OF NOMINAL TAM

Elia Calligari

PhD student – Linguistics

elia.calligari01@universitadipavia.it



UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA

ETT 2025
MPI-EVA Leipzig

CONTENTS

1. Overview of the debate

2. A tentative proposal

3. Problems

4. Roadmap



UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA
Dipartimento di
Studi Umanistici



UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA

Overview of the debate

The first comparative analysis of nominal TAM is found in **Nordlinger & Sadler 2004**.

The authors provide the following taxonomy:

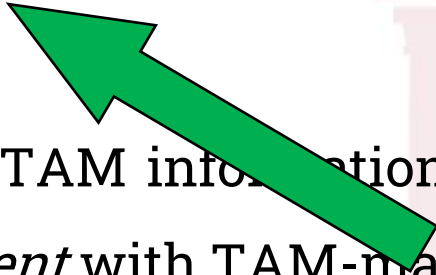
- **Independent nominal TAM** = TAM information only scopes over the NP, contributing values like PST, FUT, IRR.
- **Propositional nominal TAM** = clausal TAM information is marked within the NP, either *exclusively* or in *agreement* with TAM-marking in the VP.



Overview of the debate

The first comparative analysis of nominal TAM is found in **Nordlinger & Sadler 2004**.

The authors provide the following taxonomy:

- **Independent nominal TAM** = TAM information only scopes over the NP, contributing values like PST, FUT, IRR.
 - **Propositional nominal TAM** = clausal TAM information is marked within the NP, either *exclusively* or in *agreement* with TAM-marking in the VP.
- 



Independent nominal TAM

(6) O-va-ta che-róga-kue-pe.

3-move-FUT 1SG-house-PST-in

‘He will move into my former house.’

(7) A-va-va’ekue hóga-rã-pe.

1SG-move-PST 3.house-FUT-in

‘I have moved into his future house.’

Paraguayan Guaraní – Tupian; Nordlinger & Sadler 2004: 781



Overview of the debate

- While N&S 2004 propose a list of diagnostic features for nominal TAM equating it to verbal TAM categories, **Tonhauser 2007** is sceptical.
- **Nikolaeva (2015)** argues for treating nominal TAM as the **relative** tense of a subordinate clause, i.e. sensitive to the TAM information contributed by the governing verb.
- **Bertinetto (2020)** highlights the need to separate morphosyntactic **tense** from semantic **time** in the analysis of nominal TAM-related phenomena.



A tentative proposal

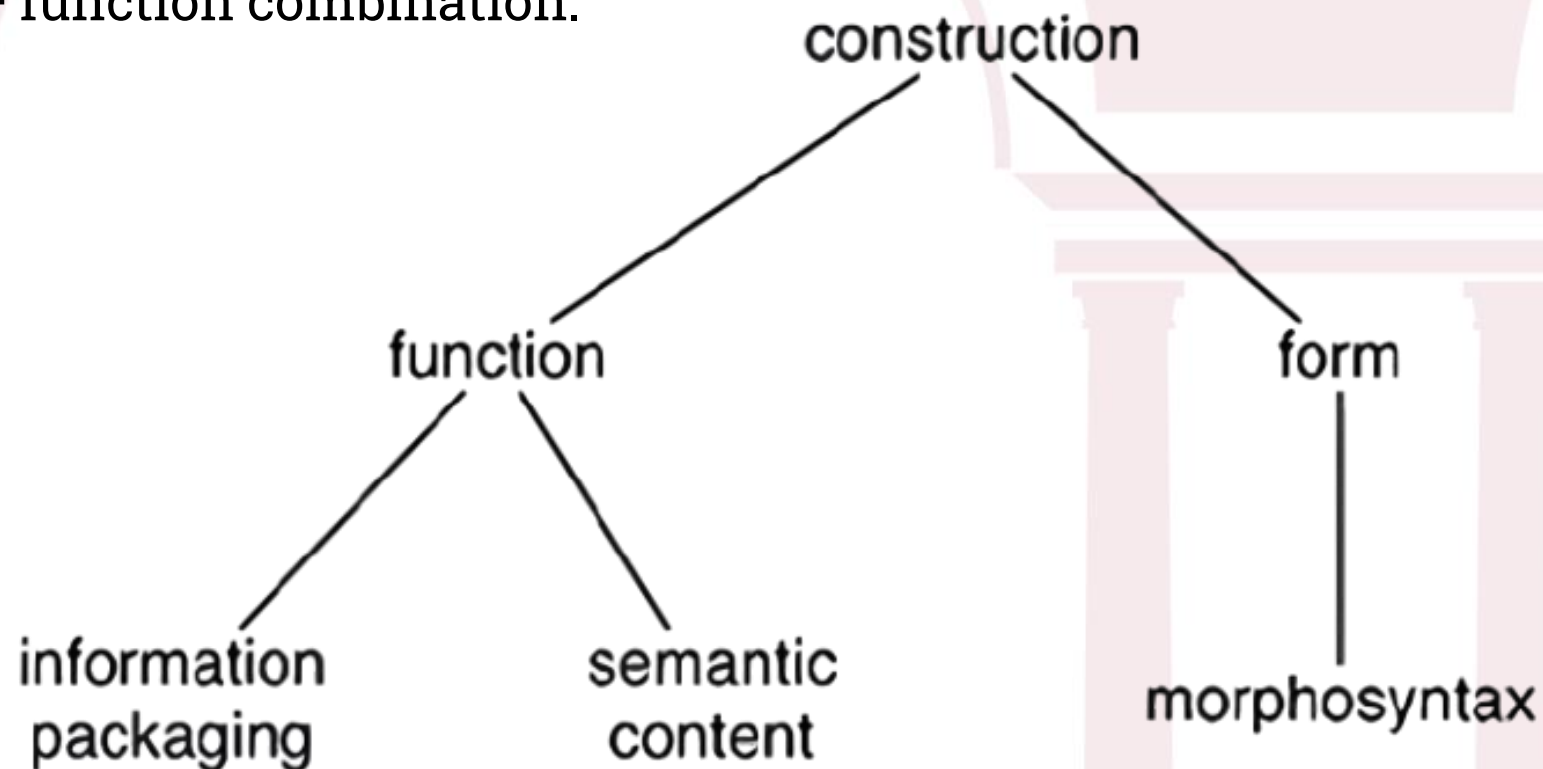
(Independent) Nominal TAM is widely used as a **descriptive category**: cf. e.g. Haude 2011 on Movima (mzp – SAm isolate); Lecarme 2012 on Somali (som – Afro-Asiatic); Leisiö 2014 on Nganasan (nio – Uralic); Estigarribia 2020 on Paraguayan Guaraní (gug – Tupian); Payne & Vidal 2020 on Pilagá (plg – Guaykuruan); Faria Junior 2022 on Bakairi (bkq – Cariban); Terhart 2024 on Paunaka (pnk – Maipurean)...

**A COMPARATIVE CONCEPT IS
STILL MISSING!**



A tentative proposal

Covering **independent** nominal TAM, we propose a **hybrid comparative concept** (Croft 2022: 17-19): form + function combination.

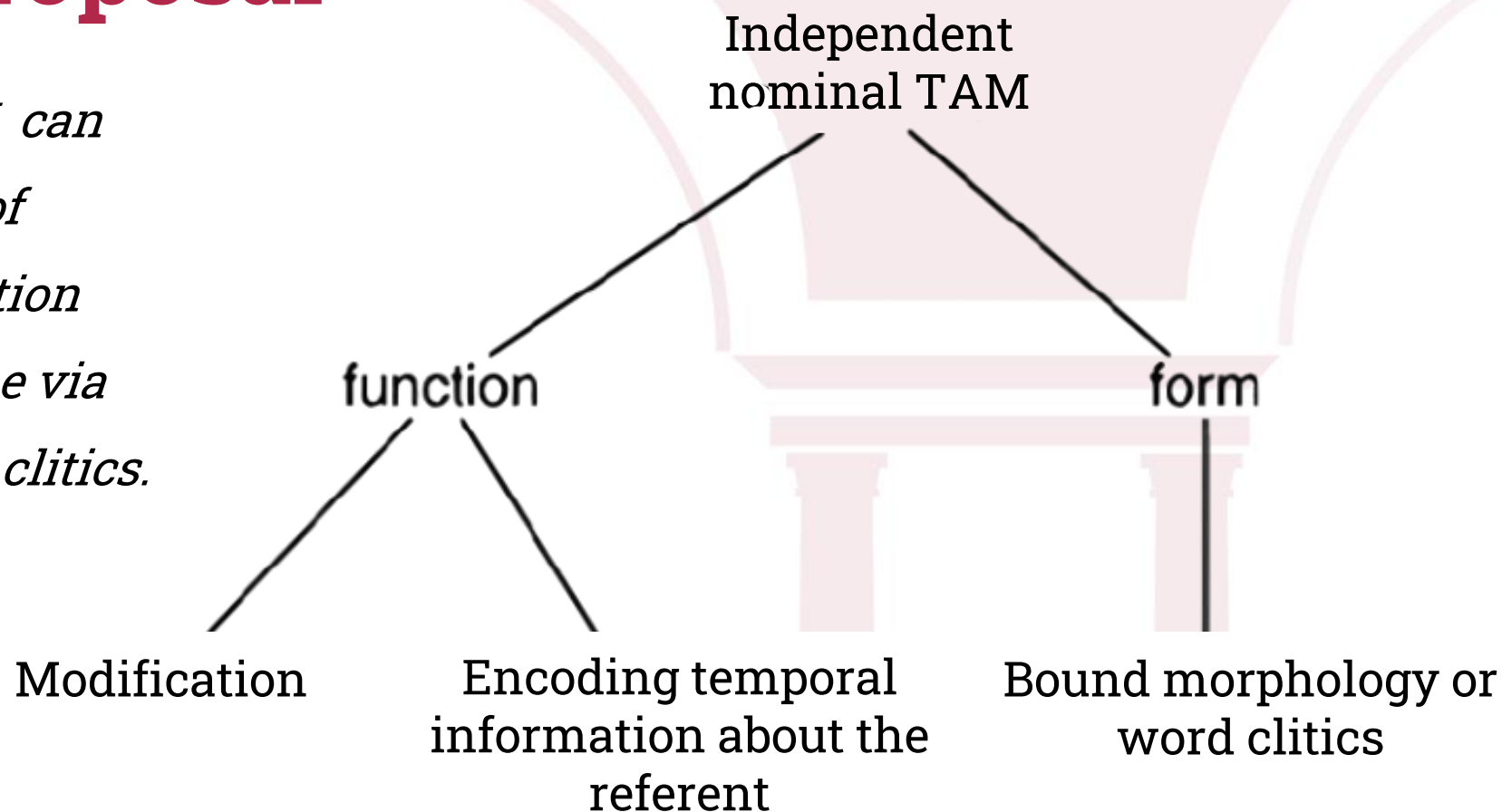


Croft 2022: 5



A tentative proposal

Independent nominal TAM can be defined as the marking of nouns for relevant information about their existence in time via bound morphemes or word clitics.



Nominal past proper

Suruahá (swx – Arauan; Huber Azevedo 2024: 74)

*Dihizi iri uda=**kaba**=ra madi gadyguua-si-auaky*

Dihiji 3M.POSS house=**FORMER**=OBJ people borrow-SEQ-3M.PPST.DECL.FH

People borrowed Dihiji's ex-house [The community kept living in Dihiji's house after he died]

Paraguayan Guaraní (gug – Tupian; Estigarribia 2020: 122)

*vaka akã-**ngue** yvy=guy*

cow head-**POST** earth=under

Buried cow head (a way of cooking a cow's head for food)



Deceased referent marker

Hup (jup – Puinavean; Epps 2008: 353)

ʔin=pãç=wəd=cud

peʔ-ní-h

1PL=father's.brother=RESP=DCSD

sick-INFR2-DECL

Our late uncle was sick

Maco (wpc – Sálivan; Rosés Labrada 2015: 272)

d-aʔd̪i-mina-ma

∅-mik^w-in-a

Cachero

1PL-grandfather-DEC-TOP

3SG.M-be.called-PST-TAME

PN

Our late grandfather was called Cachero



Anaphoric nominal past

Nasa (pbb – Paezan; Díaz Montenegro 2019: 277-8)

- a. *txã* *tigre=ku=ka* *dehe* *ça*
DET tiger=PST.RM=3SG.IRR₂ sleep/IPFV F.P
[Here's where] the tiger was sleeping

- b. *ãçx* *na* *iglesia u'se* *ũs-a'* *txã-me=ka* *çe*
now DET church new COP₁/IPFV-3SG.REAL.EST DEM-NEG=3SG.IRR₂ F.P
[At that time] the new church that stands today did not exist



A tentative proposal: past-oriented nominal TAM

NOMINAL PAST PROPER

signals that the property or possessive relation denoted for the marked entity x has ceased to be true by the reference time.

It was once the case
that $P(x)$

DECEASED

REFERENT MARKER

specialised form of nominal past limited to human referents (cf. recent thread in LingTyp).

It was once the case
that $E(a)$

ANAPHORIC NOM. PAST

signals that the marked entity x is bound to a past reference time and absent at the moment of utterance (cf. anaphoric articles in Becker 2021).

It was the case that there
existed an x such that $P(x)$



Nominal future / irrealis

Nganasan (nio – Uralic; Leisiö 2014: 45)

*the suffix is traditionally called “predestinative”

kəntə-δə-m-tə *melïδïqə-m*

sledge-PRD-ACC-2SG do-1SG

I have built a sledge for you [your future sledge].

Paunaka (pnk – Maipurean; Terhart 2024: 267)

echÿu *aitubuchepÿi* *ti-jÿka-tu* *ti-yuna-ji* *ti-ebitaka* *chi-sane-ina*

DEM boy 3-grow.IRR-IAM 3-go.irr-RPRT 3-clear.IRR 3-field-IRR.NV

[...] the boy has grown up, he will go and clear his future field, it is said.



A tentative proposal: future-oriented nominal TAM

- Going beyond language-specific labels like **nominal future** and **nominal irrealis**, these markers mark the noun as non-referential, i.e. denoting a general representative from a category.
- There is “**lack of commitment**” on the part of the speaker about the concrete existence of a specific referent (Nikolaeva 2015: 121ff.).
- Tentative evidence of **grammaticalisation** from functive / essive markers in Northern Samoyedic.

In the future: $\Diamond P(x)$



Problems

1. Most cases of nominal TAM are unknown to Indo-European languages, but how are we to treat latinate **ex-**, DRMs like ENG **late**, ITA *fu, già* ? → does it make sense to **compare WEIRD and underresourced** languages for productivity in derivation? How?
2. Propositional nominal TAM appears a rather heterogeneous set of phenomena responding to a **different comparative concept**: in languages with propositional nominal TAM the issue is *where* clausal temporal information is encoded.

Propositional nominal TAM

I exclude cases like Sirionó (srq – Tupian), where TAM information is expressed by clitics that can optionally attach to nouns: nominal TAM here is epiphenomenal (Dahl, p.c.).

- (56) Áe íí osó-ke-**rv**
he water go-PAST-PERF
'He went to the water.' (Firestone 1965:35)
- (60) Áe osó-ke-**rv** íí-**rv**
he go-PAST-PERF water-PERF
'He went to the water.' (ibid., 35)
- (61) Kitóba eráo róa asé[́]siq-**rv**
Cristobal he.carry meat Ascension-PERF
'Cristobal took meat to Ascension.' (ibid.)

Nordlinger
& Sadler
2004: 795



Propositional nominal TAM

I exclude cases like Sirionó (srq – Tupian), where TAM information is expressed by clitics that can optionally attach to nouns: nominal TAM here is epiphenomenal (Dahl, p.c.).

- (56) Áe íí osó-ke-rv
he water go-PAST-PERF
'He went to the water.' (Firestone 1965:35)
- (60) Áe osó-ke-rv íí-rv
he go-PAST-PERF water-PERF
'He went to the water.' (ibid., 35)
- (61) Kitóba eráo roo asésiq-rv
Cristobal he.carry meat Ascension-PERF
'Cristobal took meat to Ascension.' (ibid.)

**THOUGH USEFUL
FOR DIACHRONIC
CONSIDERATIONS!**

Nordlinger
& Sadler
2004: 795



Propositional nominal TAM: tense-inflected pronouns

(67) Baridji-ri ḍaṇi gaba.

far.away-ALL go 1.SG.FUT

‘I’ll go a long way off.’ (Wurm & Hercus 1976:40)

(68) Bami ṇaḍu.

see 1.SG.A.PRES

‘I (can) see.’ (ibid., 41)

Paakantyi – Australian; Nordlinger & Sadler 2004: 781



Propositional nominal TAM: suffix repetition

(41) Ngada niween maarn-**in** wu-tha.

1.SG.NOM 3.SG.OBJ spear-OBJ give-GNF

‘I gave him a spear.’ (Klokeid 1976:476, ex. 56a)

(42) Ngada niwentharr maarn-**arr** wu-tharr.

1.SG.NOM 3.SG.NFOBJ spear-NFOBJ give-NFUT

‘I gave him a spear.’ (ibid., ex. 56b)

(43) Ngada bilaa wu-**thur** ngimbenthar diin-**kur** wangalk-**ur**

1.SG.NOM tomorrow give-FUT 2.SG.FOBJ this-FOBJ boomerang-FOBJ

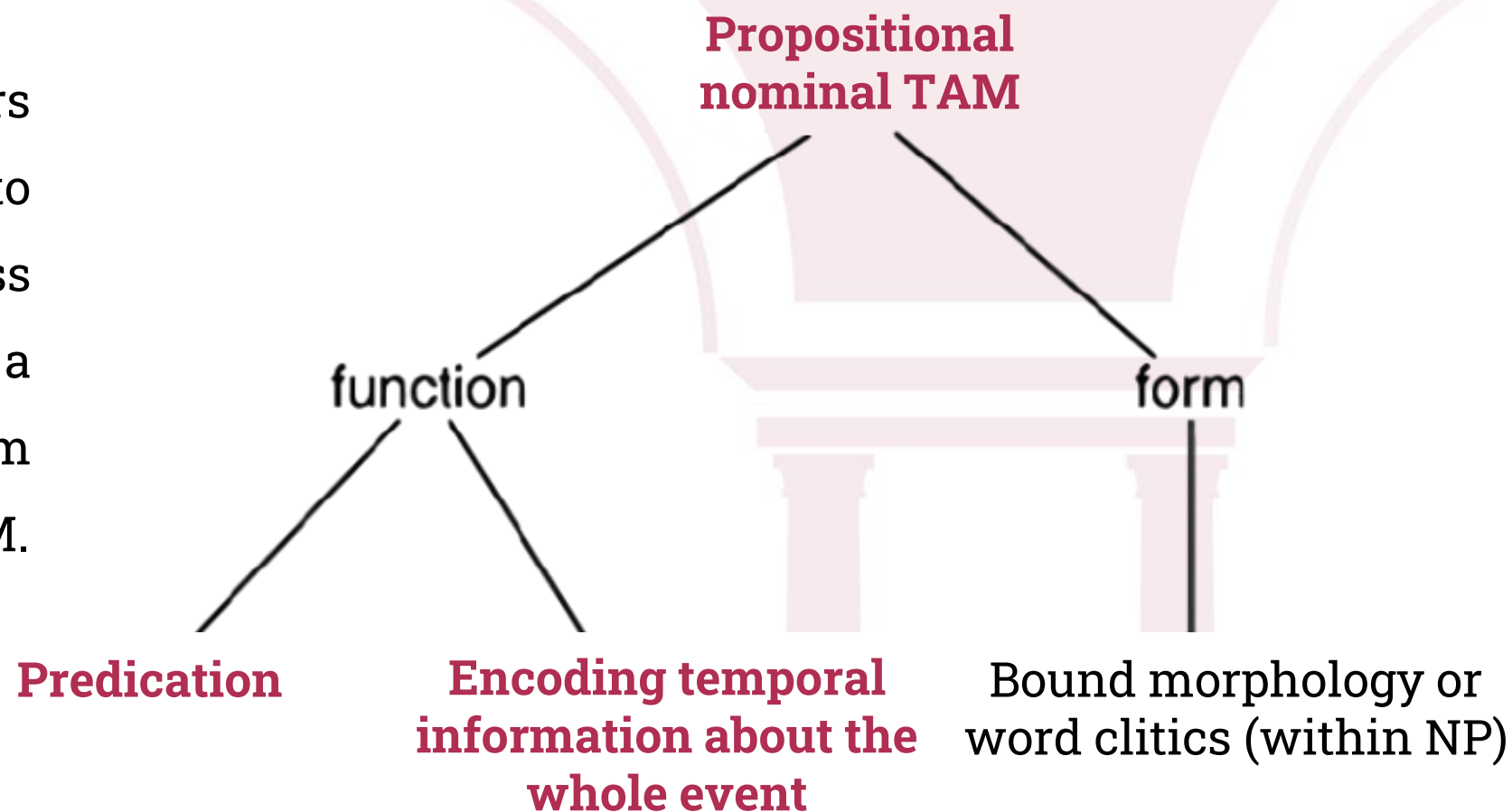
‘I’ll give you this boomerang tomorrow.’ (ibid., 493, ex. 91b)

Lardil – Australian; Nordlinger & Sadler 2004: 781



Problems

When clausal TAM markers are incorporated into pronouns or spread across verbal arguments we face a **different phenomenon** from propositional nominal TAM.



Roadmap

Sampling

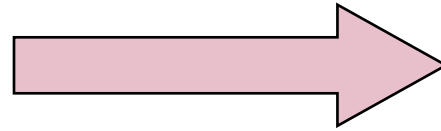
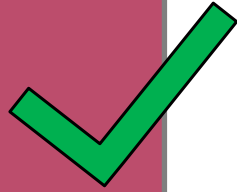
- Variety sampling
- 500 languages
- Diversity Value
- Rijkhoff et al. 1993,
Rijkhoff & Bakker 1998,
Bakker 2011



Roadmap

Sampling

- Variety sampling
- 500 languages
- Diversity Value
- Rijkhoff et al. 1993, Rijkhoff & Bakker 1998, Bakker 2011



Data extraction



- Local database
- Genealogical and areal information (Hammarström & Donohue 2014)
- Updated, comprehensive def. of nominal TAM



Roadmap

Data extraction

- Variety sampling
 - Local database
- 500 languages
 - Genealogical and areal information (Hammarström & Donohue 2014)
- Diversity value
 - Updated, comprehensive def. of nominal TAM



Case studies...

- Focus on specific areal and genealogic contexts
- In-depth analysis of texts, corpora, field data
- Looking for evidence of grammaticalisation



References

- Bakker, Dik. 2011. Language Sampling. In Jae J. Song (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Language Typology*. 100-128.
- Bertinetto, Pier Marco. 2020. On nominal tense. *Language Typology* 24(2). 311-352.
- Croft, Bill. 2022. *Morphosyntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Díaz Montenegro, Esteban. 2019. *El habla nasa (páez) de Munchique: nuevos acercamientos a su sociolingüística, fonología y sintaxis*. Université Lumière Lyon II dissertation.
- Epps, Patience. 2008. *A grammar of Hup*. Berlin, New York: Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Estigarribia, Bruno. 2020. *A Grammar of Paraguayan Guaraní*. London: UCL Press.
- Faria Junior, Geraldo Pinto de. 2022. *A grammar of the Bakairi language*. Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden dissertation.
- Hammarström, Harald & Donohue, Mark. 2014 Some Principles on the Use of Macro-Areas in Typological Comparison. *Language Dynamics and Change* 4. 167-187.
- Haude, Katharina. 2011. "She kisses her late husband" = "She kissed her husband": nominal tense in Movima. In Jan Wohlgemuth & Michael Cysouw (eds.), *Rara & Rarissima: Documenting the Fringes of Linguistic Diversity*. 295-116.
- Huber Azevedo, Adriana Maria. 2024. *A grammatical description of Suruwahá (Arawá)*. Zürich: Universität Zürich MA thesis
- Lecarme, Jacqueline. 2012. Nominal Tense. In Robert I. Binnick (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Tense and Aspect*. 696-718.
- Leisiö, Larisa. 2014. Imennye kategorii vremeni v nganasanskom i drugix severnosamodijskix jazykax [Nominal tense categories in Nganasan and other Northern Samoyedic languages]. *Voprosy jazykoznanija* 1. 39-59.

- Nikolaeva, Irina. 2015. On the expression of TAM on nouns: Evidence from Tundra Nenets. *Lingua* 166. 99-126.
- Nordlinger, Rachel & Sadler, Louisa. 2004. Nominal Tense in Crosslinguistic Perspective. *Language* 80(4). 776-806.
- Payne Doris L. & Vidal, Alejandra. 2020. Pilagá determiners and demonstratives: Discourse use and grammaticalisation. In Åshild Næss, Anna Margetts & Yvonne Treis (eds.) *Demonstratives in discourse*. 149-183.
- Rijkhoff, Jan & Bakker, Dik. 1998. Language sampling. *Linguistic Typology* 2. 263-314.
- Rijkhoff, Jan & Bakker, Dik & Hegenveld, Kees & Kahrel, Peter. 1993. A method of language sampling. *Studies in Language* 17(1). 169-203.
- Rosés Labrada, Jorge E. 2015. *The Mako language: Vitality, Grammar and Classification*. University of Western Ontario dissertation.
- Terhart, Lena. 2024. *A grammar of Paunaka*. Berlin: Language Science Press.
- Tonhauser, Judith. 2007. Nominal Tense? The Meaning of Guaraní Nominal Temporal Markers. *Language* 83(4). 831-869.

THANK YOU!