

If it would only rain! Predicate-centered focus, epistemicity and assertion in Secoya

It has long been noted that predicate-centered focus does not operate as a discrete focus subsystem within the grammar of a certain language. PCF rather tends to correlate with certain aspectual/temporal and polar grammatical categories, a fact that has been particularly discussed with respect to African languages (for two well-known accounts see Hyman and Watters 1984 regarding the effects of the intrinsic focus properties of negation, and Güldemann 2003 regarding the development of PCF into progressive aspect). The relevance that other grammatical categories closely linked to the predicate can have for PCF, notably modality, has received less attention so far (but see Lohnstein 2012 regarding *verum focus* in German).

In this talk I present an overview about the relation between the epistemic(-evidential) verb inflection in Secoya on the one hand and PCF notions and encoding on the other. Information-structural indications in Secoya rely on a large array of encoding means: constituent order, nominal and verbal inflectional options (case markers, etc.), semantically specific emphatic lexemes and prosodic support. The occurrence of particle *ti* carrying high pitch accent in (1), for instance, is particularly marked and serves the emphasis of the denotational semantics of the following constituent with regard to its degree or intensity. Here it targets the main verb (stem *ju'i* 'die') and underlines its sudden effectiveness.

- (1) saiona, ise'kë tani ti jukëña
sai -o -na i -ë -se'e -kë tai -ni ti ju'i -kë -ña
go -F -DS PRN -M -only -M fall -SS EMPH die -PFV.2/3SG.M -SH
she went on and he fell down and died (on the spot)

Secoya is an Amazonian language (West Tucanoan) in which the speaker's epistemic stance (including some evidential considerations) is obligatorily expressed at the predicate by inflectional TAM suffixes that also cross-reference the subject. The modal inflectional choice contributes different degrees of illocutionary force. States of affairs regarded as certain (2) are encoded by inflectional suffixes that distinguish from those for rather speculative states of affairs (3). In the latter inflectional paradigm, speech act participants are completely ignored as subject cross-referencing controllers, so that only nominal suffixes get employed. Note that the nominal morphology does not compromise the predicative function of the target but just blocks its contribution of assertive force.

- (2) Ja'kë títapi.
ja' -kë tita -pi
father -M reach_and_remain -PFV.3SG.M
Father has come.

- (3) Ja'kë titaë
ja' -kë tita -ë
father -M reach_and_remain -PFV.2/3SG.M
[- question intonation] Father might have come.
[+ question intonation] Has Father come?

Secoya predicates with nominal inflection can also be extended for assertive reasons: the additional epistemic Probability marker *-ni* contributes moderate assertive force (as in biased questions, wishes, beliefs), while the additional evidential Secondhand marker *-ña* (see 1) establishes full assertives for hearsay/reported information.

I will discuss the effects that these modal and assertive configurations have on PCF and particularities compared to non-PCF focalization. The study is based on a documentation corpus on Ecuadorian Secoya and some complementary experimental and elicitation data.