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# Inactive Marking on Nouny Lexemes

## 1 Semantically Aligned Languages

“Semantically Aligned Language” (SAL) is a term proposed by Wichmann and Donohue (p.c.) to cover the type of syntactic alignment found in the languages grouped as “split-intransitive”, “agentive”, “active-stative” in the literature. A SAL is a language that has two ways of marking the argument of an intransitive predication: One is the same as the marking used for actors of transitive predications, another one the same as the one used for undergoers in transitive predications.

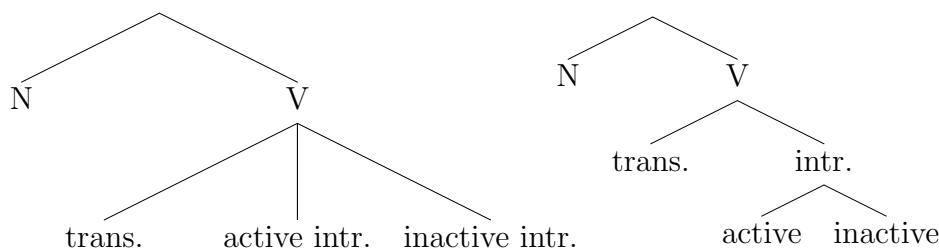
SAL differ as to whether the choice of the marker for a given predicate depends on the speaker’s will to express more or less agentivity (Fluid-S), or whether it depends not on the speaker but on the subcategorization of the verb for a certain marker, excluding the other one (Split-S) (Song 2001).

In Split-S languages, these markers are often used to establish subclasses of verbs. Transitive verbs can take both markers. Intransitive verbs fall into two groups according to the marker they subcategorize for. Nouns cannot take either marker.

		active marker	
		+	-
inactive marker	+	$V_{tr}$	$V_{intr,inact}$
	-	$V_{intr,act}$	N

Table 1: Word classes in SAL as defined by the occurrence of activity markers

For Guarani, this is normally represented as follows (adapted from Gregores & Suárez (1967) and from Velazquez-Castillo (1996)):



As is clear from the trees, research on Guarani has supposed the existence of a lexical category V with some subcategories established by the markers of agentivity.

This paper shows that in Guarani these markers provide a means of establishing not subclasses of verbs as shown above, but rather major lexical categories, which do not fit well into a classical N/V-schema.

Most of the literature on SAL has concentrated on verbs, as has most of the discussion on case systems of the world (see among others Klimov (1974), Van Valin (1990), Mithun (1991), Nichols (1992), Primus (1995, 1999), Blake (1994) as an exception). I argue that this may be a too narrow view and should be extended to the level of predication. In this way, interesting behavior of other word classes in conjunction with activity markers can be captured. Future discussion of semantically aligned languages can profit from this broadened view. Other SAL might exhibit a behavior similar to Guarani regarding the use of activity markers on word classes other than prototypical verbs.

## 2 Guarani as SAL

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>(1) che     <b>a</b>-guata<br/> 1s:SUBJ 1s:ACT-walk<br/> “I walk.”</p>        | <p>(2) che     <b>a</b>-juka     Juan-pe<br/> 1s:SUBJ 1s:ACT-kill Juan-OBL<br/> “I kill Juan.”</p> |
| <p>(3) che     <b>che</b>-tuicha<br/> 1s:SUBJ 1s:INACT-big<br/> “I am tall.”</p> | <p>(4) Juan <b>che</b>-juka<br/> Juan 1s:INACT-kill<br/> “Juan kills me.”</p>                      |

Examples (1) and (2) show active marking, examples (3) and (4) show inactive marking. The difference in the treatment of the intransitive predications in (1) and (3) grants Guarani the status of SAL

In Guarani, there is homonymy between the inactive marker and the possession marker (cf. Gregores & Suárez 1967, Velazquez-Castillo 1996, Guasch 1997, Krivoshein de Canese & Acosta Alcaraz 2001). This is common in SAL as noted already by Klimov (1974) who gives the Dakota example *ma-pa* “my head”, *ma-kaška*, “He hits me.”.

However, the Dakota markers attach to different bases, a referent and a verb, and there is normally no reason for confusion. Most linguists would not call *ma-* in *ma-pa* an inactive marker, nor would they call *ma-* in *ma-kaška* a possessive marker. In Guarani the homonyms can also be kept apart.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>(5) kyse <b>i</b>-tuicha<br/> knife 3:INACT-big<br/> “The knife is big.”</p> | <p>(6) <b>i</b>-kyse <b>i</b>-tuicha<br/> 3:POSS 3:INACT-big<br/> “His knife is big.”</p> |
|---|---|

In (5), the prefix *i-* attaches to the predicate, giving an inactive reading, whereas in (6), *i-* attaches also to a referent, giving possessive reading. Further evidence for the status of *ituicha* as a predicate in (5) and *ikyse* as a referent in (6) lies in the use of predicative or referential tense (more or less like nominal and verbal tense):

- |     |                          |                     |     |                             |             |
|-----|--------------------------|---------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-------------|
| (7) | i-kyse                   | i-tuicha- <b>ta</b> | (8) | i-kyse- <b>kue</b>          | i-tuicha    |
|     | 3:POSS-knife             | 3:INACT-big-PREDFUT |     | 3:POSS-knife-REFPAST        | 3:INACT-big |
|     | “His knife will be big.” |                     |     | “His former knife was big.” |             |

The predicative future *-ta* in (7) leaves no doubt about the predicate nature of *ituichata*, whereas the referential past *-kue* in (8) clearly identifies *ikysekue* as a referential phrase.

Negation also proves the predicatehood of *ituicha*:

- |     |                         |                                |
|-----|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (9) | i-kyse                  | <b>nda</b> -i-tuicha- <b>i</b> |
|     | 3:POSS-knife            | NEG-3:INACT-big-NEG            |
|     | “His knife is not big.” |                                |

There is homonymy in the prefixes for inactivity and possession, but they can be kept apart through the bases they attach to.

### 3 The Inactive Prefix in Guarani

Siewierska (1998:17f) notes that identity between nominal and verbal person marking is the norm in South America. A special feature of Guarani is that the free subject pronoun is also homonymous with the other two markers. This is a rather rare phenomenon (cf. Siewierska 2004:252).

- |      |                                       |                    |    |                  |          |       |
|------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----|------------------|----------|-------|
| (10) | <b>che</b>                            | <b>che</b> -tuicha | ha | <b>che</b> -kyse | i-tuicha | avei. |
|      | 1s:SUBJ                               | 1s:INACT-big and   |    | 1s:POSS-knife    | 3:INACT  | also  |
|      | “I am tall and my knife is big, too.” |                    |    |                  |          |       |

The first occurrence of *che(-)* in (10) is the free subject pronoun, the second one the inactive prefix and the third one the possessive prefix.

- |      |              |              |
|------|--------------|--------------|
| (11) | che          | che-tuicha   |
|      | 1s:SUBJ      | 1s:INACT-big |
|      | “I am tall.” |              |

Analogous to (6) we see that in (11) *chetuicha* is the predicate and *che* the argument of the predicate. Now consider (12)-(15):

(12) che che-kyse  
 1s:SUBJ 1s:INACT-knife  
 “I have a knife.”

(13) che che-kyse-ta  
 1s:SUBJ 1s:INACT-knife-PREDFUT  
 “I will have a knife.”

(14) \*che che-kyse-kue  
 1s:SUBJ 1s:INACT-knife-REFPAST

(15) che nda-che-kyse-i  
 1s:SUBJ NEG-1s:INACT-knife-NEG  
 “I have not a knife.”

*chekyse* is in the same position as *chetuicha* in (11). It takes tense and negation morphology typical for predicates (see (7)-(9)) and it does not take referential tense, as shown in (14). *kyse* in examples (12), (13) and (15) is thus the head of the predicative phrase. The prefix *che-* in examples (12), (13) and (15) must be analysed as the inactive marker and not as the possessive marker. The inactive marker can thus attach to *kyse*, a concrete concept which would normally be regarded as a prototypical candidate for a noun, being concrete, alienable and time stable. *kyse* is no exception, almost all other “nouns” in Guarani can occur in this construction.

If we want to use the Guarani person prefixes to establish word classes, like in table 1, we get the following:

		active marker	
		+	-
inactive marker	+	$V_{tr}$	$V_{intr,inact},N$
	-	$V_{intr,act}$	-

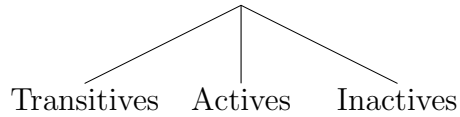
Table 2: Word classes in Guarani as defined by the occurrence of activity markers

The field for lexemes taking neither marker is empty. Crucially, there is no equivalent to the N in table 1. As shown in Nordhoff (2004), there is now morphosyntactic way whatsoever to tell  $V_{intr,inact}$  from N (also see Dietrich (2001)). Hence, there is no reason to grant them separate classes. The class N is merged with the class  $V_{intr,inact}$ , leaving three classes of verbs. The label “Verb” does not contribute to a distinction and can be dropped. This yields:

		active marker	
		+	-
inactive marker	+	Transitives	Inactives
	-	Actives	-

Table 3: Word classes in Guarani, revisited

This can be represented in a tree structure different from Gregores & Suárez (1967) and Velazquez-Castillo (1996):



The person marking is thus used not to establish a subclass of verbs, but rather to establish major lexical categories. These major lexical categories are sensitive to semantic alignment.

## 4 Conclusion

The inactive prefix in Guarani can be differentiated from the homonymous possessive prefix because they occur in different syntactic positions. The inactive prefix can attach to other word classes besides prototypical verbs if they head a predication. This means that semantic alignment can be seen on word classes other than verbs. Restriction to verbs does not cover the full range of lexemes affected by semantic alignment. Therefore, the predication should be taken as the basis for the analysis of syntactic alignment instead of the verb. Further research taking this into consideration might reveal that other SAL exhibit a similar behaviour to Guarani. At least for Bolivian Guarani (Schuchard 1979) and Yuki (Villafañe 2004), this is true.



Figure 1: classical model



Figure 2: New model for Guarani

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