

TENSE NONSENSE IN DIEGUEÑO

The purpose of this paper is to characterize the mechanisms used for expressing temporal aspect in Diegueño. Basic to such a characterization is a description of the function of the suffix /x/, which seems at first glance to function as a marker of future tense, and of the verbal elements which may accompany the main verb of a surface string. (I shall term these verbal elements "auxiliaries". The term is used loosely here; I am not claiming that the verbal forms grouped under this term would be dominated by a node AUX in a transformational grammar.)

The auxiliaries are composed of two basic units: a prefix denoting the temporal reference of the sentence, and a stem describing the character of the action in question. Auxiliary stems may be divided into three semantic classes:¹

I. Motion

<u>singular</u>	<u>plural</u>	
-a:	-na:	going
-yi:w	-nyi:w	coming

II. Manner

<u>singular</u>	<u>plural</u>	
-wa:	ñwa:y	sitting
-yak	ñwa:y	lying
-yu:	ñwa:y	standing
-kwa:	ñwa:y	making noise

III. Locative

<u>singular</u>	<u>plural</u>	
-pa:	-nikmič	being there

The motion auxiliaries may be used only with verbs semantically compatible with the notions of "going" or "coming"; thus (4) is unacceptable because of semantic anomaly.

- (1) ña: 'yi:w tiyi:w
 I come AUX-come
 I came

- (2) *na:* *'a:* *ti'a:*
 I go AUX-go

I went

- (3) *i:pač wənu:* *pə'a:*
 man run AUX-go

The man is running

- (4) **na:* *'nak* *ti'a:*
 I sit AUX-go

By the same token, the manner auxiliaries cannot co-occur with verbs whose meaning is basically incompatible with the manner in question:

- (5) *na:* *'šma:* *tiyak*
 I sleep AUX-lie

I was sleeping

- (6) *na:* *piyi:* *pəškwi:* *tiyu:*
 I here stand AUX-stand

I was standing here

- (7) *na:* *piyi:* *'nak* *tiwa:*
 I here sit AUX-sit

I was sitting here

- (8) *i:pač* *wəwa:w* *təkwa:*
 man holler AUX-make noise

The man was hollering

- (9) **na:* *'amp* *tiwa:*
 I walk AUX-sit

- (10) **na:* *'amp* *tiyak*
 I walk AUX-lie

- (11) * *na:* *piyi:* *'nak* *tiyu:*
 I here sit AUX-stand

- (12) **na:* *payča:* *tikwa:*
 I think AUX-make noise

The locative stem has the same phonological shape and the same plural as the verb /pa:/ meaning 'to get there'. This stem is more widely used than the others, and can always be used in their place, as there are no verbs semantically incompatible with it. In most cases where it is used, it is completely devoid of semantic content (e.g. (16) and (19)).

Normally, these auxiliaries occur following the principal verb of a surface string. In contexts where the principal verb is understood, a reduced surface string with only the auxiliary in VP position may result, as in (14):

- (13) na: 'a: ti'a:
I go AUX-go

I went

- (14) *na:* *ti'a:*
I AUX-go

I went (possible answer to question)

There is evidence that the auxiliaries are derived from higher verb phrases: they have much the same properties as full verbs. For instance, both auxiliaries and verbs take inflectional endings indicating whether or not the subject of an embedded clause is the same as the subject of the matrix clause.

- (15) na: i:pač nəsɪŋ a:řapəm 'wu:
I man his wife he hit diff. I see
subj.

I see the man who hit his wife.

- [illegible]

I see the man who hit his wife

Like full verbs, auxiliaries are inflected for person.

- (17) ma:č tem̥pa:
you AUX-second person- locative (/m/ being the infix
second person marker)

You were there

They may also take the prefixed /ni/ introducing a "when" or "if" clause:

- (18) mač ñimiñwat
 you if, you finish
 when

When you finished

- (19) mač mal^ymam ñitempa:
 you little if, AUX
 when

When you were little

Only full verbs and auxiliaries may take the suffix /x/ which indicates that the action will take place at some time in the future (see below for further discussion of this suffix):

- (20) xkwañ wəmi:x
 baby cry /x/

The baby will cry

- (21) xkwañ wəmi: təkwa:x
 baby cry AUX /x/

The baby will cry

As stated above, the auxiliary prefixes /p/ and /t/ indicate the time reference of the sentence. From the following data, it seems clear that /p/ represents present tense and /t/ past tense:

- (22) ña: tənay 'ima: tipa:
 I yesterday dance AUX

I was dancing yesterday

- (23) ña: ñəpil^y 'ima: pipa:
 now

I'm dancing now

- (24) * ña: tənay 'ima: pipa:

- (25) * ña: ñəpil^y 'ima: tipa:

If present and past tenses are marked in this manner, what of future tense? As sentence (26) shows, a different mechanism, suffixation of the morpheme /x/, is used to express the fact that an action has not yet occurred:

(26) ña 'ima:x

I will dance

Whereas the prefixes /p/ and /t/ occur only on "auxiliary" forms, the suffix /x/ may occur when no "auxiliary" is present, suffixed to the verb, as in (26). Given that the prefixes /t/ and /p/ and the suffix /x/ indicate past, present, and future tense respectively, we would expect them to be mutually incompatible within a simple sentence; thus we correctly predict the ungrammaticality of sentences like (27), in which the "auxiliary" contains both the prefix /p/ and the suffix /x/.

(27) *xkwañ wəmi: pəkwa:x
baby cry AUX

Yet we find that sentences like (28), in which the "auxiliary" contains both the prefix /t/ and the suffix /x/, are perfectly acceptable:

(28) xkwañ wəmi: təkwa:x
baby cry AUX

The baby will cry (certainty)

The fact that the prefix /t/ is compatible with the expression of future aspect suggests that this prefix might be more correctly viewed as indicating non-present, rather than past, time. In its unmarked form, non-present indicates past time, as in (29):

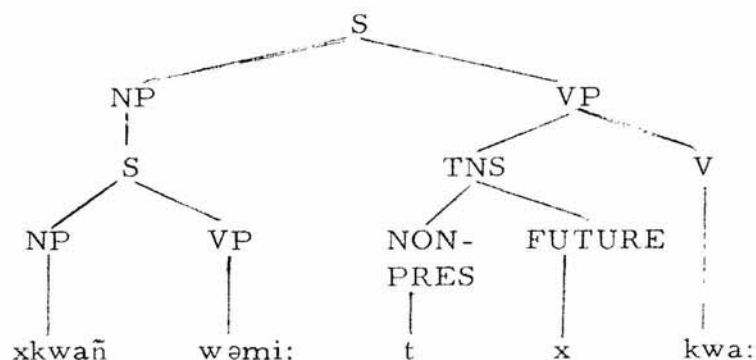
(29) xkwañ wəmi: təkwa:

The baby was crying ;

in its marked form, i.e., when supplemented by the presence of the suffix /x/, non-present indicates future time (as in (28)).

We propose the following tentative deep structure for sentence (28):²

(28')



Sentence (29) would then have the same deep structure with the exception

that it would contain no occurrence of FUTURE under the tense node. The deep structure of (27) would be thrown out because its tense node would dominate the mutually incompatible nodes PRES and FUTURE.

So far, instances of the suffix /x/ have been noted attached to the "auxiliary"; when there was no auxiliary, as in (26), /x/ has been attached to the main verb. In fact, /x/ may be attached to the main verb even when the sentence contains an "auxiliary", with concomitant difference in the meaning of the sentence, as exemplified by (30):³

- (30) i:pač wəwa:wx təkwa:
man holler /x/ AUX

The man was going to holler

Interestingly enough, although sentences with the prefix /p/ and the suffix /x/ co-occurring on the "auxiliary" are unacceptable, sentences like (31) are. Here /x/ is suffixed to the main verb of a surface string containing an "auxiliary" with prefixed /p/:

- (31) i:pač wəwa:wx pəkwa:
man holler /x/ AUX

The man is about to holler (right now)

Furthermore, it is possible for the suffix /x/ to occur attached both to the main verb of a surface string and to the "auxiliary", again with concomitant change in meaning. Thus (32) is an acceptable sentence:

- (32) i:pač wəwa:wx təkwa:x

The man will holler (probability, or distant future)

Just as (27) was unacceptable, however, (33), whose auxiliary contains both /p/ and /x/, is also unacceptable:

- (33) *i:pač wəwa:wx pəkwa:x

One could attempt to explain the semantics of (30), (31) and (32) by saying that the tense of the lower verb is meaningful only with respect to the tense of the higher verb. Thus (30) indicates an action which had yet to be performed at some time in the past, (31) an action which has yet to be performed with respect to the present, and (32) an action which, at some time in the future, will have yet to be performed. Such an analysis implies that (28) indicates a present action taking place at some future time. Such a statement, if indeed it has any meaning, is misleading; what is expressed by (28) is the speaker's certainty that the action will be performed. Given the present analysis of /p/, /t/ and /x/ as tense markers, there is no way of explaining the semantics of sentences like (28).

Examining other types of sentences in the language containing verbs with suffixed /x/, we find that the treatment of this suffix suggested above simply will not account for the data. There is a set of verbs which impose the suffix /x/ on lower verbs; one of these is the verb of negation, /maw/.⁴ Sentence (35), whose embedded verb does not contain the suffix /x/, is ungrammatical; negation of (34) gives us (36) instead.

(34) i:pač wəwa:w

The man is hollering

(35) *i:pač wəwa:w ma:w

(36) i:pač wəwa:wx ma:w

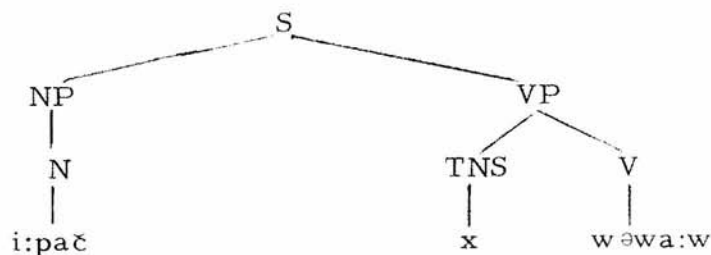
The man is not hollering

On the basis of the data presented up to this point, we could claim the deep structure of (37) should be represented as (37'):

(37) i:pač wəwa:wx

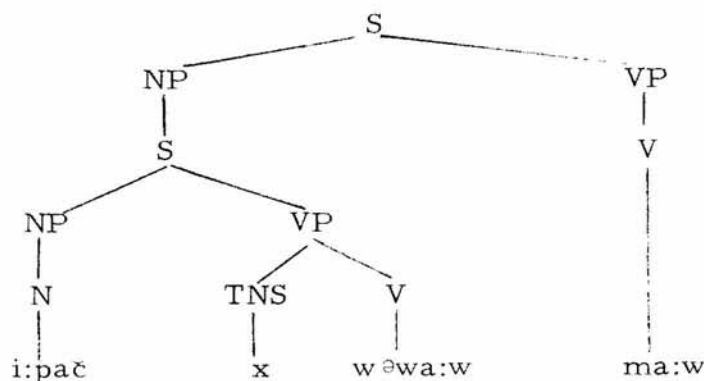
The man will holler

(37')



If such a claim were correct, we would expect (38) to represent the deep structure of the negative counterpart of (37):

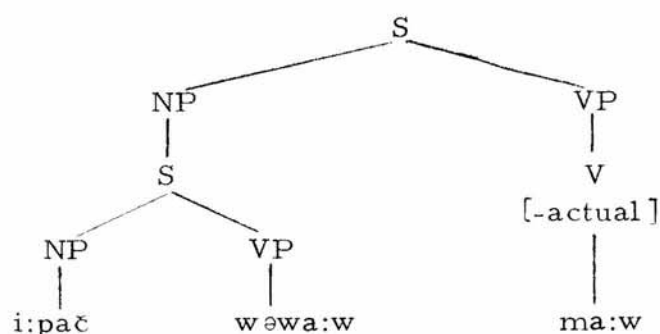
(38)



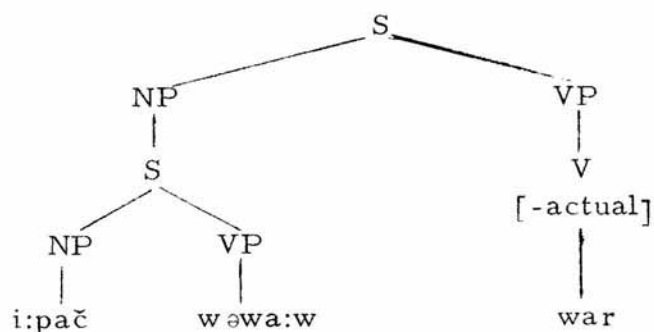
It seems hardly coincidental that the /x/ of negatives and that of futures should share so many properties. There is an obvious generalization to be captured--namely, that the suffix /x/ occurs suffixed to verbs in negative or semi-negative environments, i.e., when the action in question is not occurring or has not yet occurred.

Sentences (36), (39) and (40) then have the deep structures represented in (36''), (39') and (40') respectively; a transformational rule inserting /x/ onto the complement verb is sensitive to some feature of the higher verb, which I will term [-actual].

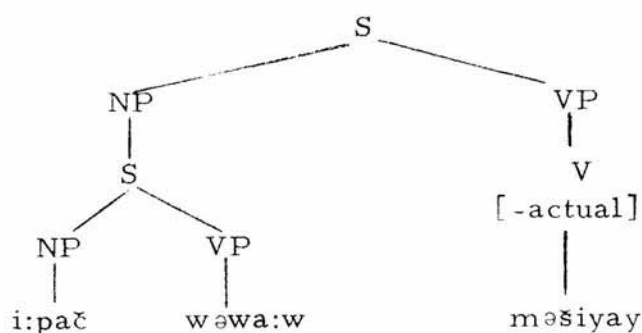
(36'')



(39')



(40')

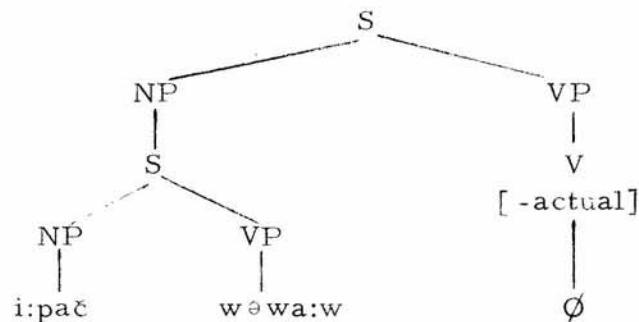


Rule of /x/-insertion:

X	S [NP-VP] _S	V	Y
		[-actual]	
1	2	3	4
→ 1	2+ /x/	3	4

Of course, we can no longer claim that (37') represents the correct deep structure of (37); if /x/ is imposed by a higher verb in some cases, as we have shown that it must be, a uniform treatment of the suffix requires that this be so in all cases. What is the higher verb in (37)? One could claim that the suffix /x/ is imposed on the embedded verb here by a higher illocutionary verb of prediction; in the absence of any evidence supporting such a claim, we will assume that the /x/ of (37) is derived from a higher verb phrase containing only the information that the actuality of the lower verb is not being asserted. Thus we have the deep structure (37''):

(37'')

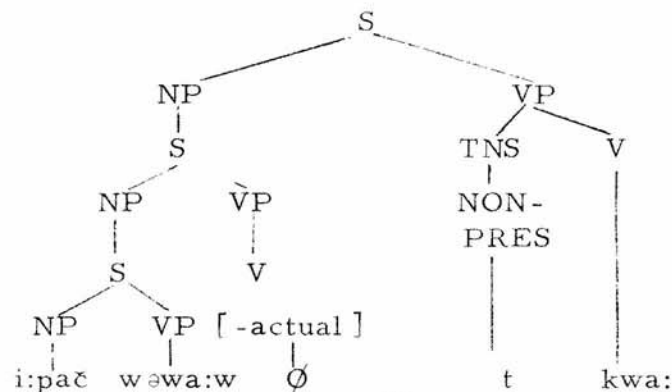


Sentence (30), repeated here for convenience, will then have the deep structure (30'), which includes the semantic representation of (37) embedded under an auxiliary containing the marker for non-present time:

(30) i:pač wəwa:wx təkwa:

The man was going to holler

(30')



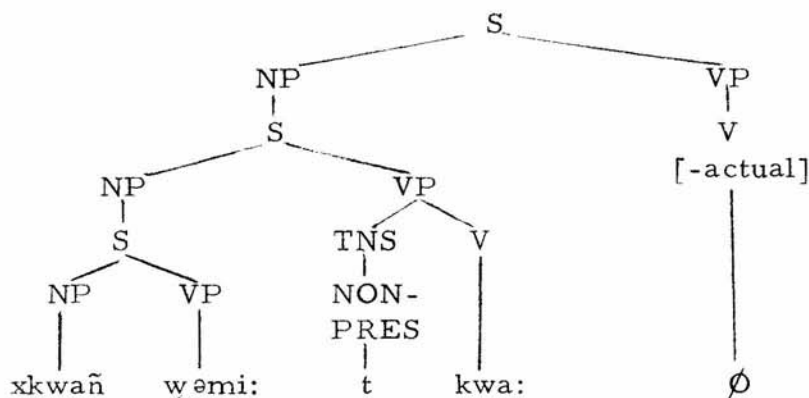
Sentence (31) will have a deep structure identical to (30') except that the highest verb phrase will contain the tense marker PRES rather than NON-PRES.

The difference in meaning between sentences like (28) and sentences like (32), i. e., the fact that the former expresses the speaker's certainty that the action in question will take place whereas the latter expresses only the probability of its occurrence, resides in the fact that the deep structure of (32) contains a verb phrase immediately dominating the lowest sentence which specifies that the actuality of the dominated verb is not being asserted. Thus we have the deep structures (28'') and (32'):

(28) xkwañ wəmi: təkwa:x

The baby will cry (certainty)

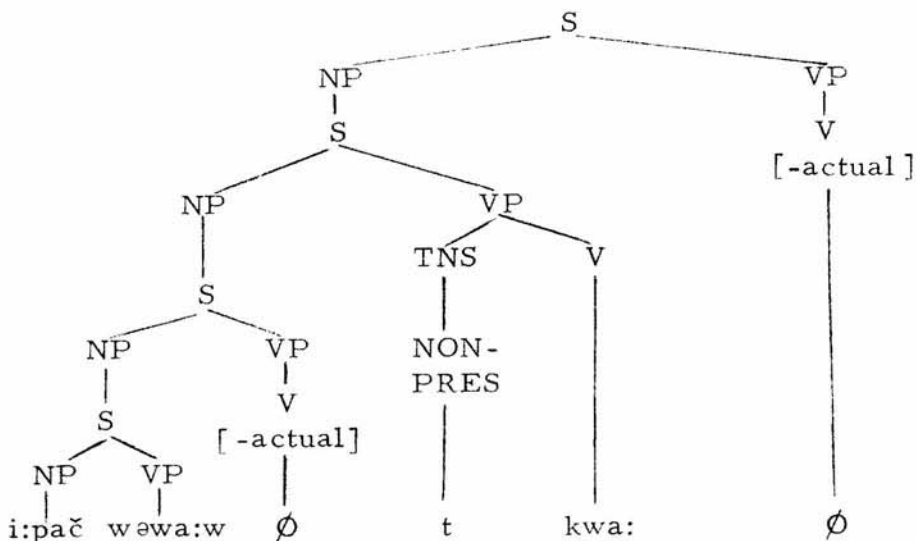
(28'')



(32) i:pač wəwa:wx təkwa:x

The man will holler (probability or distant future)

(32')



Thus we see that the suffix /x/ is not a tense marker at all; rather, it is a marking imposed by a higher verb to indicate that the actuality of the event in question is not being asserted. When attached to auxiliaries bearing the "non-present" prefix /t/, it indicates that the time of the action in question is non-actual, i.e., that the action has not yet occurred.

Given that /x/ is not a marker of tense per se, we are forced to abandon our previous explanation of the non-occurrence of auxiliary forms containing both the prefix /p/ and the suffix /x/. If the suffix /x/ indicates simply that the actuality of the action in question is not being asserted, it would not be unreasonable to expect that sentences like (27) (repeated below for the reader's convenience) should be acceptable, meaning that the action in question may or may not be taking place.

(27) *xkwañ wəmi: pəkwa:x

The question now arises as to whether the prefix /p/ is really a marker of present tense. In fact, it seems more likely that this prefix is related to the demonstrative /p/ meaning "this" or "that" and to the locative /pa/ meaning "there",⁷ and really means "immediately verifiable to the speaker". Such an analysis of the prefix explains why sentences like (27) are unacceptable, in that it is impossible to equivocate about the actuality of an immediately verifiable action.

Thus we see that what appeared at first to be indicators of time reference are actually something quite different; the prefixes /p/ and /t/ referred to in the body of this paper as indicating the distinction between "present" and "non-present" are actually indicators of "immediate verifiability" and "non-immediate verifiability", and the suffix /x/, which seemed at first glance to indicate future tense, really indicates that the occurrence of an action is not being asserted. The three items interact to perform the functions of a tense system.

FOOTNOTES

1. There is actually a fourth class of auxiliary stems, that containing the existential /yu:/ referred to by M. Langdon (p. 260). Sentences like the following seem to contain instances of this stem:

sifi	məspa:x	tuyu:
lady	die	AUX

The lady was going to die

This stem does not work like the others, in that it does not require inflection for person. Thus, while we find the second person marker /m/ preceding other auxiliary stems (see (17)), we do not find it here:

ma:č	məsa:wx	tuyu
you	eat	AUX

You were going to eat

2. We disregard here and in subsequent examples the personal inflectional vowels occurring in the surface string between the auxiliary prefix and the stem.

3. Sentences like (30), having the surface form NP - V_t/x/ - /t/+stem, are often translated by the informant as meaning that the action in question did not in fact take place. Thus a possible translation of (30) would be "The man was going to holler, but he didn't." The assumption that the action did not occur is present only by implication, however, as the following sentences show:

i:pač	wəwa:wx	təkwa:,	ña:	ʔip
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The man was going to holler, and I heard him

ña	sa:wx	tipa:	tisa:w
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I was going to eat and I did eat

4. See N. Stenson.

5. An alternative solution is that the /x/ of (36) is present in the deep structure as part of the verb of negation and lowered onto the dominated verb. But this seems unlikely, especially since the one-word negative response to questions is /ma:w/ rather than */xma:w/ or */ma:wx/.

6. One might claim that the verb /məšiyay/ contains an instance of NEG at the abstract level, since it expresses what is often termed a "negative" emotion. The /x/ of (40) could then be derived from a higher instance of NEG, rather than from the same source as the /x/ of future tense. But such an analysis could not apply to the verb meaning "to want".

7. See Langdon, p. 166.

REFERENCES

Langdon, M. (1966), A Grammar of Diegueño: the Mesa Grande Dialect, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Berkeley.

Stenson, N., Negation in Diegueño, in this issue.