Résumé

Tense across categories: evidence from Mbyá

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In this talk, I investigate the relation between nominal tense and verbal tense in Mbyá, a Tupi Guarani language spoken in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, which is closely related to Paraguayan Guaraní.

I argue that the functional category of tense is part both of the extended projection of the NP, and of the extended projection of the VP. I show that tense is interpreted differently in the two domains, and I offer a pragmatic explanation of this difference.

The argument focuses on the distribution and interpretation of the temporal suffixe -kue. This suffix is attested both inside NPs and in a variety of clauses (matrix, complement and relative).

The nominal uses of -kue give rise to two inferences that Tonhauser (2006, 2007) identified in Paraguayan Guaraní, and which she called the Existence Property and the Change of State property. Crucially, the clausal uses of -kue do not give rise to these inferences.

Tonhauser argues that the Existence and Change of State properties are built in the lexical entry of nominal -kue, and as a consequence she proposes that -kue should not be analyzed uniformly as a tense.

In this talk, I explore a different analysis of -kue based on data elicited in Mbyá. I argue that the Existence Property and the Change of State Property are a mixture of local implicatures and presuppositions that arise from the interaction of the literal meaning of -kue with general constraints on the interpretation of NPs. This allows me to propose a uniform analysis of -kue across its nominal and its clausal uses, as a relative past tense, and therefore to maintain that there is a strong parallelism between the functional structure of extended VPs and that of extended NPs.