

(Main Sessions: mood/modality)

### **Realis and irrealis in the Zamucoan languages**

The Zamucoan family only includes two living languages (Ayoreo and Chamacoco) spoken in the northern Chaco, between Bolivia and Paraguay. Both languages are endangered and are spoken by approximately 4500 and 1600 people, respectively. The linguistic family also includes an extinct language, Ancient Zamuco, described in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Jesuit Father Ignace Chomé. Ancient Zamuco and Ayoreo are very close to each other (Kelm 1964). Although they show low lexical similarity with Chamacoco, the Zamucoan languages share remarkable similarities in morphology (Ciucci 2013).

In all Zamucoan languages the verb expresses neither tense nor aspect (Bertinetto 2013). Based on data by Chomé for Ancient Zamuco, Bertinetto for Ayoreo, and from my own fieldwork for Chamacoco, I will show that all Zamucoan languages present a realis/irrealis opposition and should best be considered “mood-prominent” in Bhat’s terms. I will discuss realis/irrealis marking on (a) verbs, (b) negatives, (c) subordinators and (d) possibly nouns, showing some diachronical tendencies concerning the morphological expression of mood in the Zamucoan family.

Ancient Zamuco presented a full-paradigm in the realis vs irrealis opposition in verb inflection, which has partly been lost in Ayoreo and Chamacoco. Although the residual personal inflections employed correspond to those of Ancient Zamuco, a sort of complementarity emerges, because Ayoreo and Chamacoco have preserved the irrealis in different persons (second and partly first persons on Ayoreo, third person in Chamacoco). Furthermore, in Ancient Zamuco the interaction between the person and mood inflections presents peculiarities reminiscent of so-called conjunct/disjunct or egophoric systems (see Curnow 2002, Tournadre 2008, a.o.). The realis vs irrealis distinction is also detectable, although fragmentarily, in some Zamucoan dialects documented by D’Orbigny in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lussagnet 1961/1962), which exhibit characteristics not to be found in the currently spoken languages.

The gradual loss of the realis vs irrealis opposition in verb inflection appears to be counterbalanced by the emergence of modality-sensitive negations. Ancient Zamuco negation did not mark modality, while Ayoreo shows two negative particles, *que* and *ca*, respectively specialized for realis and irrealis. These elements were already documented in Ancient Zamuco and its dialects, although they did not have the same function as in Ayoreo. The split negation system to convey the contrast realis vs irrealis is also present in Chamacoco, probably as an innovation. One can hypothesize that, while reducing the inflectional paradigm of the irrealis, the Zamucoan languages have developed other tools to express modality.

Ayoreo subordinating connectives distinguish realis and irrealis. In this case the comparison with the other languages is difficult, owing to scarcity of data for Ancient Zamuco and to the intense linguistic contact between Chamacoco and Spanish, which resulted in the replacement of many indigenous subordinators by Spanish loans (Bertinetto & Ciucci 2011).

Finally, the expression of modality in the Zamucoan languages will be compared with that of the surrounding languages, showing that, despite absence of any genetic relationship with other linguistic families, traces of a remote areal contact may emerge.

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