

Spatial Orientation in Yagua Epic Narrative: A Case Study of Grammar Emerging from Discourse

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It has often been noted that languages apportion different relative significance to the notions of space and time. In particular, the grammars of most Indo-European languages tend to treat temporal relations as central to the organization of grammar and discourse. These notions are realized in grammatical systems known as "tense" and "aspect," and are often viewed as essential to the structuring of narrative discourse. On the other hand, the grammars of many languages of the Americas are much more concerned with spatial relations such as location and direction, while expressing temporal relations only optionally, or contingently based on a spatial prototype.

In this paper, I would like to show that in Yagua, a typologically fairly typical language of the Peruvian Amazon region, folkloric narrative is structured more in terms of space than time. I will identify two spatial orientations for Yagua Folkloric narrative: *Eusynoptic orientation*, and *counter cartographic orientation*. These terms are used by Purves (2010) to describe the narrative structures of the epic Greek poems Iliad and Odyssey respectively. Furthermore, I will show that certain grammatical constructions, termed "inversions", in Yagua are especially adapted to demark episodic boundaries in folkloric narrative.

This study provides an explicit case study of how grammatical structure "emerges" from community-specific habit patterns of discourse composition (Hopper 1987, Fox 2007, *inter alia*).

References

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- Purves, Alex. 2010. *Space and time in Ancient Greek narrative*. Cambridge University Press.