

A reconstruction of the Proto Puyuma aspectual and modal system

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In this talk, I will compare the aspectual and modal systems in two dialects of Puyuma, Nanwang and Katripul, and as a basis for the reconstruction of the proto system. In modern Puyuma dialects, there is an asymmetry between ACTOR VOICE and UNDERGOER VOICE in terms of the aspectual/modal value that they may be used to denote. In both dialects, AV clauses show a REALIS vs. IRREALIS distinction. In Nanwang, UV clauses display the same dichotomy (REALIS vs. IRREALIS), but in Katripul the distinction is between PERFECTIVE vs. IMPERFECTIVE. Based on these facts, I argue that Proto Puyuma was an aspect prominent language, i.e. the major distinction in its aspectual/modal system was between PERFECTIVE/IMPERFECTIVE, and there were modal affixes for marking intention and possibility. It is suggested that in the course of time, the modal markers faded out, and then the IMPERFECTIVE AV verbs were reinterpreted as PROGRESSIVE and IRREALIS respectively. In Nanwang, an analogical change has taken place and the pressure for paradigmatic leveling pushed the UV IMPERFECTIVE forms to shift to PROGRESSIVE too. In Katripul, where the modal affixes are kept, the system displays an AV/UV asymmetry; AV shows a REALIS/IRREALIS opposition, and UV PERFECTIVE/IMPERFECTIVE. With regard to the modal system that is reconstructed for Proto Puyuma, there is external evidence from Thao to support the proposal.