

Third person agreement and passive marking in Tacanan languages: a historical perspective

1 Introduction

1.1 Tacanan languages

name	location	no. speakers	total popul.	actual linguists
Araona	Bolivia	~ 150	150	Emkow
Ese Ejja	Bolivia & Peru	~ 600	1200	Vuillermet, Chavarría
Cavineña	Bolivia	~ 1200	4000	Guillaume
Reyesano	Bolivia	~ 15	4000	Guillaume
Tacana	Bolivia	~ 50	4000	Ø



- (phonological) reconstructions by Key (1968), Girard (1971) with 504 cognate sets
- hypothetical link with Panoan languages (116 cognate sets in Girard 1971)
- Project: morpho-syntactic reconstruction based on new studies available

1.2 Argument-coding systems of Tacanan languages

- Araona, Cavineña, Ese Ejja and Tacana: ergative case-marking systems

(1) a. Araona intransitive clause

Shanito *hododo*
 Shanito.ABS run
 ‘Shanito runs.’ (Emkow 2006: 180)

b. Araona transitive clause

Shanito=a *awada* *pisa-ta-iki*
 Shanito=ERG tapir.ABS hunt-3A-ANT
 ‘Shanito has hunted a tapir.’ (Emkow 2006: 179)

(2) a. Cavineña intransitive clause

[*Tuke tupuju*] =*tu* ***iba*** *tsajaja-chine*.
3SG behind =3SG.ABS jaguar.ABS run-REC.PAST
'The jaguar ran behind him (i.e., the jaguar chased him).' (Camp and Liccardi 1972:33)

b. Cavineña transitive clause

Iba=ra =*tu* *iye-chine* ***takure***.
jaguar=ERG =3SG.ABS kill-REC.PAST chicken.ABS
'The jaguar killed the chicken.'¹

(3) a. Bawaja Ese Ejja intransitive clause

Hikioho ta [***Sha éja***] *ani*.
here CONTR Sha spirit.ABS sit
'Here is Sha's spirit.' (Chavarría 1984: 62)

b. Bawaja Ese Ejja transitive clause

Shawe=a ***dokuei*** *tekua-ta-pa*.
tapir=ERG deer.ABS kill-3A-PAST
'The tapir killed the deer.' (Chavarría 2003: 2)

(4) a. Tacana intransitive clause

... [tu-sa ete su] beju puetiba jida **deja**.
3SG-GEN house LOC PTCL return that man.ABS
'... the man returned to his house.' (Ottaviano 1980: 12)

b. Tacana transitive clause

Da *ina-ta-itia* [***iba*** ***ja***] ***bechu***.
PTCL grab-3A-PAST jaguar ERG howler.monkey.ABS
'The jaguar grabbed a howler monkey.' (Ottaviano 1980: 18)

Flexible constituent order

NPs optional

No person marking the verb, except **3rd person suffix -ta** in Araona, Ese Ejja and Tacana

2nd position bound pronouns (Cavineña)

- cross-referencing of core arguments: S in (2a), O in (2b)
- functionally very close to a system of person marking in the verb
- ergative patterning (full details in Guillaume 2006, 2008: ch. 15, forthcoming-b)

¹ When no indication of the source of an example is provided, the example comes from my own corpus.

- Reyesano: no case-marking:

(5) a. Reyesano intransitive clause

A-wudzudzu-a te awadza.
 PAST-run-PAST BM tapir
 ‘The tapir ran away (when I shot at it)’.

b. Reyesano transitive clause

A-kachi-ta(-a) te iba te awadza.
 PAST-bite-3A-PAST BM jaguar BM tapir
 ‘The tapir bit the jaguar’.
 (or, with a different context: the jaguar bit the tapir)

Person marking in the verb

- **3rd person suffix -ta**, as in (5b)
- prefixes for SAPs → same forms and distribution for S, A and O²

(6) Reyesano intransitive clause

m-a-puti-a
 1SG-PAST-go-PAST
 ‘I went’

(7) Reyesano transitive clauses involving a SAP and a 3rd person

- a. SAP→3 combinations b. 3→SAP

m-a-ba(-a) *m-a-ba-ta(-a)*
 1SG-PAST-see-PAST 1SG-PAST-see-3A-PAST
 ‘I saw him/her/it/them’ ‘he/she/it/they saw me’

Table 1: Summary of argument-coding systems of Tacanan languages

Language	marking system	alignment	ergative marker
Araona	case-marking	ergative	= <i>(h)a</i>
Cavineña	case-marking + second position bound pronouns	ergative	= <i>ra</i>
Ese Ejja	case-marking	ergative	= <i>(y)a</i>
Reyesano	person marking in the verb	hierarchical	—
Tacana	case-marking	ergative	<i>ha</i>

1.3 The problem

Verbal suffix *-ta*:

- 3rd person plural S argument within an intransitive clause
- 3rd person (singular or plural) A argument within a transitive clause

² See full details in Guillaume (Forthcoming-a).

1.3.1 Reyesano

(Data from Guillaume fieldnotes, forthcoming-a)

(8) Intransitive clauses

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. 3SG
a-puti-a
PAST-go-PAST
'he went' | b. 3PL
a-puti- ta (-a)
PAST-go-3S.PL-PAST
'they went' |
|---|---|

(9) Transitive clauses

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. 3→3
a-ba- ta (-a)
PAST-see-3A-PAST
'he/they saw him/them' | b. 3→1
m-a-ba- ta (-a)
1SG-PAST-see-3A-PAST
'he/they saw me' |
|--|--|

Note:

- intransitive *-ta* is **nearly obligatory**
- transitive *-ta* **obligatory**

1.3.2 Tacana

(10) Intransitive clauses

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. 3SG
e-neti-ani
IMPFV-stand-IMPFV
'he is standing'
(Ottaviano & Ottaviano 1965: 388) | b. 3PL
e-neti- ta -ani
IMPFV-stand-3S.PL-IMPFV
'they are standing'
(Ottaviano & Ottaviano 1965: 363) |
|--|---|

(11) Transitive clauses

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. 3→3
e-manuame- ta -ani
IMPFV-kill-3A-IMPFV
'He is killing him.' (Ottaviano & Ottaviano 1965: 362) | b. 3→1
[Jame cuana ja] da ema jid'iu- ta -itia
frog PL ERG ? 1SG.ABS peal-3A-PAST
'The frogs skinned me.' (Ottaviano 1980: 14-15) |
|--|--|

Note:

- intransitive *-ta* **nearly obligatory**
- transitive *-ta* **obligatory**

1.3.3 Ese Ejja (Bawaja dialect)³

(12) Intransitive clauses

a. 3SG

Hikioho ta [Sha éja] ani.
here CONTR Sha spirit sit
'Here is Sha's spirit.'
(Chavarría 1984: 62)

b. 3PL

[Ebákua deja] ani-ta kiawéshaschii.
child male sit-3S.PL there.far.away
'The children are there far away.'
(Chavarría 1984: 58)

(13) Transitive clauses (Chavarría 2003)

a. 3→3

Shawe-a dokuei tekua-ta-pa
tapir-ERG deer.ABS kill-3A-PAST
'The tapir killed the deer.'
(Chavarría 2003: 2)

b. 3→1

Eseéja-a mo tekuá-ta-ni
person-ERG 1SG.ABS sting-3A-PROG
'Someone is stinging me.'
(Chavarría 1984: 26)

Note:

- intransitive *-ta* **optional and very rare** (mostly found on posture/motion verbs)
- transitive *-ta/-ka* **obligatory**

1.3.4 Araona

(14) Intransitive clauses

a. 3SG

ketsio reunion po-ani
when meeting be-PROG
'When will the meeting be?'
(Emkow 2006: 288)

b. 3PL

teje-o pó-ta-ja
plantation-LOC be-3S.PL-PROG
'They are in the plantation.'
(D. Pitman 1980: 44)

(15) Transitive clauses

a. 3→3

Wada teje kwé-ta-ja
3SG.ERG garden.ABS cut-3A-PROG
'He is clearing the garden.' (D. Pitman 1980: 33)

b. 3→1

Wada ema dobea-ta-iki jidyó.
3SG.ERG 1SG.ABS bring-3A-PAST here
'He brought me here.' (D. Pitman 1980: 83)

Note:

- intransitive *-ta* **optional and very rare** (only found on posture verbs and 'be')
- transitive *-ta* **apparently not obligatory** (Emkow 2006: 560)

³ We have the same pattern in the Sonene dialect of Ese Ejja, except that we have *-ka* instead of *-ta* (Shoemaker and Shoemaker 1965, Vuillermet 2007, pc.), according to the regular phonological change **t* → *k* in this language.

1.3.5 Cavineña (passive)

Data from Guillaume (2004, 2008, Fieldnotes)

(16) Intransitive verb (only found with *maju-* ‘die’): unspecificity of 3rd person S (?)

Ejeke=kwana =tu maju-**ta**-ya.
INT=UNCERT =3SG.ABS die-TA-IMPFV
‘Someone (unidentified) is going to die.’

(17) Transitive verbs: agentless passive

a. A-**ta**-wa =taa =yatse!
affect-PASS-PERF =EMPH =1DL.ABS
‘We (me and my brother) got killed (lit. affected)!’

b. Kuchiru =tu tsume-**ta**-ya tsaje=ishu.
machete.ABS =3SG.ABS use-PASS-IMPFV cut.vegetation=BUT
‘The machete is used to cut the vegetation.’

Evidence for detransitivization :

- the Agent cannot be expressed
- the verb takes intransitive suffix allomorphs: *-tere* ‘COMP (itr.)’ vs. *-tirya* ‘COMP (tr.)’

(18) Dutya ekana iye-**ta-tere**-wa. *iye-**ta-tirya**-wa
all 3PL kill-PASS-COMP.ITR-PERF
‘There were all killed.’

Note: variant *-tana*

(17b') Kuchiru =tu tsume-**tana**-ya tsaje=ishu.
machete.ABS =3SG.ABS use-PASS-IMPFV cut.vegetation=BUT
‘The machete is used to cut the vegetation.’

(18') Dutya ekana iye-**tana-tere**-wa.
all 3PL kill-PASS-COMP.ITR-PERF
‘There were all killed.’

(Whether *-ta* and *-tana* are semantically identical or not is still unresolved.)

1.3.6 Summary

	intransitive <i>-ta</i>	transitive <i>-ta</i>
Reyesano	3S plural, obligatory	3A (singular or plural), obligatory
Tacana	3S plural, obligatory	3A (singular or plural), obligatory
Ese Ejja ⁴	3S plural, rare	3A (singular or plural), obligatory
Araona	3S plural, rare	3A (singular or plural), not obligatory (?)
Cavineña	3S unspecified, 1 verb	agentless passive <i>-ta</i> (~ <i>-tana</i>)

2 Diachronic development of *-ta* suffixes

- hypothesis: cognacy → single source **-ta* in proto-Tacana
- meaning of source morpheme?
 - 3rd person plural?
 - 3rd person unspecified?
 - 3rd person number-neutral?
 - passive marker?
 - something else?
- grammaticalization theory predictions:
 - **person** rather than **passive** (cf. Haspelmath 1990, Heine and Kuteva 2002: 235-7)
 - **plural** rather than **number-neutral** (because of passive output)
- hypothesis:
 - suffix **-ta* marking 3rd person plural S and A arguments

2.1.1 Development of **-ta* with intransitive verb roots

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• remained 3rd person plural S marker (Reyesano, Tacana, Ese Ejja and Araona)• loss of plural meaning → unspecified 3rd person S (Cavineña) |
|--|

Obligatory (Rey. and Tac.) vs. optional (Ara. and Ese.)
- influence of Spanish?

Restricted to the verb *maju* 'die' (Cav.):
- meaning (unspecified) congruent with evolution of **-ta* into a passive marker in Cavineña

⁴ *-ka* in the Sonene dialect of Ese Ejja.

2.1.2 Development of **-ta* with transitive verb roots

- detransitivizing passive marker (Cavineña)
- 3rd person number-neutral A (Reyesano, Tacana, Ese Ejja and Araona)

- Passive:
 - very common process (cf. Haspelmath 1990, Heine and Kuteva 2002: 235-7)
 - question of variants *-tana* (originally related or not?)
- 3rd person number-neutral A → unusual development

(definite) 3rd person plural → (definite) 3rd person number-neutral

- loss of plural marking specifications
- maintaining of definiteness
- only in transitive clauses

Hypothesis: extension for the purpose of A vs. O disambiguation:

- all languages with optional NPs
- no indication of grammatical function of core participants when NPs are absent

Why in Reyesano? Because SAP verbal marking are insensitive to grammatical functions

Why not in Cavineña? Because presence of a system of 2nd position bound pronouns

3A.PL → (3A number-neutral ? →) PASSIVE

3 Conclusion

- proposed new cognate set and proto-Tacanan morpheme **-ta* '3PL.S/A' (not in Girard 1971)
- new example of grammaticalization from 3rd person plural → passive
- identification of a possible unusual development: **(definite) 3rd person plural → (definite) 3rd person number-neutral**
- proposed explanation because of need of A vs. O disambiguation

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