

Unexpected distribution of ergative alignment: a case of innovation starting in the imperfective

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Abstract: Ye'kwana (mch, Cariban) is a language of Venezuela and Brazil spoken by about 9,000 people. An imperfective construction, cognate to a nominal construction, has introduced an ergative alignment in main clauses where all the other inflections, including past-perfectives, are non-ergative. This construction presents the same argument structure as the action nominalization: the absolutive (S/O) is prefixed as a verbal index and unmarked for case when overtly expressed; reference to the ergative (A) is not obligatory, but if an A (pro)noun occurs, it must be case marked. Typologically, it is unexpected that the sole innovative ergative main clause type identified to date in Ye'kwana codes the Imperfective aspect. This example can now be added to multiple counterexamples from the Cariban family, each independently innovated, demonstrating that claims of a universal correlation between ergativity per se with either past tense or perfective aspect can no longer be sustained. This paper analyzes the discourse distribution of the innovative construction based on a corpus-study.

Keywords: Cariban, ergative split, imperfective, covert complexity, corpus-study.

Introduction

The verbal system of Ye'kwana (mch, Cariban) main clauses was originally described as a unified system with portmanteau prefixes for transitive verbs and an indexing split for intransitive verbs (Hall 1989). Further description of Ye'kwana grammar based on corpora of undirected speech revealed that other types of main clauses are in use in both main dialects of the language, (Cáceres Arandia [2011] for the *y*-dialect and Jiménez Velázquez [2019] for the *dh*-dialect), among which, a single ergatively organized construction. Crucially, the latter construction expresses imperfective aspect, a distribution of this alignment type which is typologically unexpected. This paper describes in detail the imperfective main clause construction of Ye'kwana identifying the characteristics that

distinguish it from other etymologically related constructions. This imperfective inflection illustrated in (1a) looks structurally more like a nominal construction in terms of person indexing and apparent word order (1b) than the rest of non auxiliarized main clause constructions of Ye'kwana such as the one in (1c).

- (1) a. *Yaatamedü* *mödö.*¹
 i-w-atame-dü *mödö*
 3S-INTR-run.out-IPFV 3IN:MD
 'It's running out.' {ConvChurB.551}²
- b. *Ya'todü* *mödö.*
 i-wa'to-dü *mödö*
 3PSR-wood-POS 3IN:MD
 'That is his match (*lit.* wood).'
- c. *Mödö* *n-atame-i.*
 3IN:MD 3S-run.out-RPP
 'That has run out.' {ConvChurB.096}

This state of affairs contrast with what Gildea (1998) had originally shown in a comparative study. Gildea showed that most languages in the Cariban family present various alignment splits in main clauses with the exception of six languages, among which Ye'kwana (Gildea 1998: 42). This group of six languages was identified as using exclusively the proto-Cariban verbal system in main clauses –known since as Set I system– which presents hierarchical indexation for transitive clauses (alternatively analyzed as portmanteau indexation by some authors) and, for intransitives, an indexation split.

This paper responds to calls in the comparative literature on the Cariban family for detailed descriptions of innovative constructions. It

¹ Interlinear examples have four lines whenever one of the words presents one of the multiple morphophonological processes of Ye'kwana (palatalization, rounding, morphological and rhythmic vowel lengthening, syllable reduction) to facilitate comparison between examples through a unified representation of morphemes. Prefixes, on the other hand, do not have a unified form but their allomorphs are given in Tables 2 and 3. In the orthographic representation, all the symbols stand for their IPA equivalents except: <ch> for /tʃ/, <d> for /ɗ/, <j> for /h/, <ñ> for /ɲ/, <ö> for /ə/, <sh> for /ʃ/, <ü> for /i/, <y> for /j/ and <'> for /ʔ/.

² Examples from recorded sessions led by a native speaker —here referred to as spontaneous speech — begin with an abbreviation that provides information on the speech genre: Conv(ersation), Cto (folk narrative), Hist (personal narrative), Desc (procedural narrative), Ivw (interview). Examples from thematic elicitation sessions have a code preceded by ELIC(itation). Unattributed Ye'kwana data are taken from the author's fieldnotes.

represents a building block for the synchronic and diachronic understanding of one of the largest families of languages spoken in South America and a first example in a language of this family for internal syntactic reconstruction from a corpus linguistic approach. The first section briefly introduces the language and the speakers, section 2 introduces the characteristics of Set I clauses in Ye'kwana and section 3 other constructions necessary for understanding the structure of imperfective clauses. Sections 4 and 5 describe the form and the uses of the imperfective construction, respectively. The final section offers some conclusions.

1. The Ye'kwanas and their language

1.1. The speakers

Speakers of Ye'kwana are known in the literature also as, among other names, Mayongong and Maquiritare (see Silva Monterrey [2007: 99] for a comprehensive list). They mainly dwell in mono-ethnic villages, located in an extensive area in southern Venezuela along the rivers in the upper Paragua, middle and upper Caura, upper Ventuari and upper Orinoco basins, as well as in some villages in Brazil along the Uraricoera river. A decade ago, the total Ye'kwana population was around 8.600 people (7.997 in Venezuela [INE 2015: 94] and 579 in Brazil [IBGE 2010: 156]).

There is a noteworthy dialectal distinction characterizing the villages located in the upper Orinoco who pronounce their autonym with an initial dental fricative, /ðeʔk^wana/, while most of the other villages pronounce it with a palatal approximant, /jeʔk^wana/. This consonantal distinction involves a small number of lexemes, and the second person form of vowel initial verbal and nominal stems (with an [aδ]~[əδ] prefix in one dialect and [aj]~[əj] prefix in the other) which provides the impression of a prominent phenomenon. Speakers reflect this dialectal difference in the spelling of the ethnonym: Ye'kwana for the palatal variant and Dhe'kwana for the dental variant³. This study is based on data from the y-variety from

³ There is great variation in how the rest of the name is spelled, depending on whether the glottal stop is represented (ʔ) or omitted, whether the velar approximant is spelled with a vowel (u) or a consonant (w), and whether the velar stop is spelled in the Spanish tradition with (c) or according to the ALIV (Alfabeto de Lenguas Indígenas de Venezuela) rules with (k).

a documentation corpus with spontaneous texts and elicited data collected between 2006 and 2014 with speakers of the Erebató river villages of the Caura basin (Figure 1).

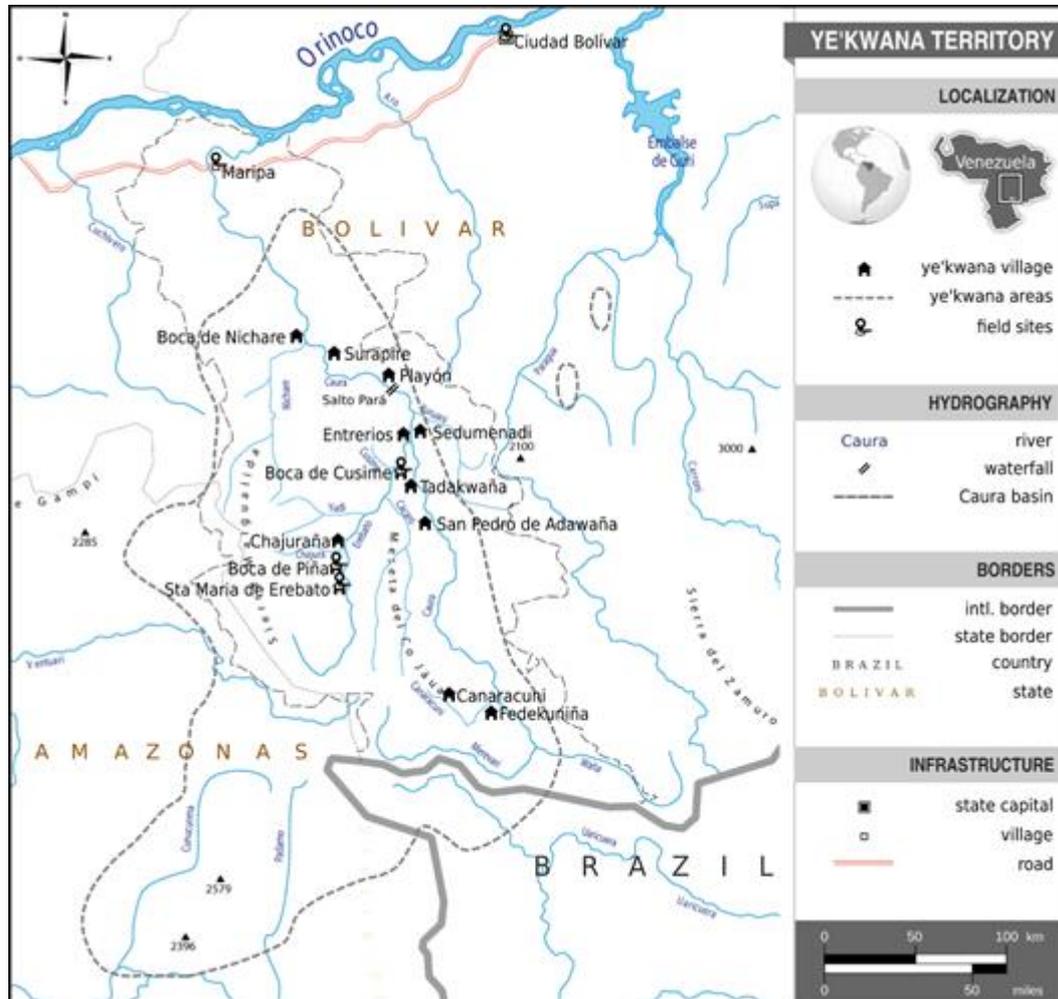


Figure 1. Ye'kwana territory and fieldwork locations

1.2. The language

Ye'kwana presents typical characteristics of languages of the Cariban family (Gildea 2012): phonologically, it preserves the iambic vowel lengthening stress system and a complex version of the morphophonological process of syllable reduction (Cáceres Arandia 2018); lexically, property concepts are expressed in their basic form not as nominal modifiers with adjectives but as secondary predicates with adverbs (ead. 2017); and, morphosyntactically, several alignment systems

co-exist in the grammar (ead. 2011, Jiménez Velázquez 2019). Contrary to other families in the Amazonian region, there are no noun classifiers, no gender distinctions and no morphological evidentiality.

In terms of description, for the y-dialect of the language, there are two theses (Cáceres Arandia 2007, Costa 2013), a grammatical description (Cáceres Arandia 2011) and another dissertation on number (Costa 2018), two articles from the 1960s (Escoriaza 1959, 1960) and an online annotated audiovisual corpus (Cáceres Arandia 2014). For the dh-dialect, there have been two thesis (Chavier 1999, Jiménez Velázquez 2019) and one dissertation on selected grammatical topics (Chavier 2008), another dissertation on discourse with an extensive annex on morphology (Hall 1988) and a few articles (Chavier 2006, Nasr Kalek 2013, Romero Figueroa 2015).

Interlinear examples presented in this paper come from the author's Toolbox database containing 5158 text records (corresponding to one or more clauses and equivalent to over 23.000 words and six hours of spontaneous speech), based on 26 of the recording sessions of the online corpus and representing the speech of 20 different speakers. Where needed, other examples come from elicitation sessions or field notes. The number of occurrences cited for the different constructions and their characteristics only take into account data from the spontaneous corpus. The following sections illustrate the morphology and syntax of main clauses in Ye'kwana.

2. Finite main clauses

Most Ye'kwana main clauses are constructed with reflexes of the morphosyntactic system that Gildea (1992, 1998) reconstructs to Proto-Cariban as being the original finite system (Set I). In Ye'kwana, the Set I system is used to make a significant number of the tense, aspect and modality distinctions available in the language: it distinguishes a non-past tense, four different pasts (recent past imperfective [RPI], distant past imperfective [DPI], recent past perfective [RPP] and distant past perfective [DPP]), two futures (certain and irrealis) and five kinds of imperative (basic imperative, jussive, permissive, prohibitive and admonitive)

(Cáceres Arandia 2011: ch. 5). This section shows the basic morphosyntax (2.1) and the person paradigms characteristic of Set I clauses (2.2).

2.1. The morphosyntax of Ye'kwana Set I clauses

In this system, A (2a), O (2b) and S (2c) are indexed on the verb, there is no case marking for any of the core arguments (A, S, O) and no auxiliaries are permitted.

	O		A
(2)	a.	<i>Edö</i> 3IN:PX 'I made this.' {DescTab.001}	<i>w-üdü-aanö</i> 1A-make-RPI <i>ewü.</i> 1SG
		A	
	b.	<i>Ñöödö</i> <i>ñöödö</i> 3AN:INV 'That one approached me.' {ConvChur.166:Anl}	<i>töwa'kö</i> <i>töwa'kö</i> exactly 1O-reach-PLAC-DP <i>yeejodijö'akene.</i> <i>y^-ejodü-jötü-akene</i>
		S	
	c.	<i>Niseweicha</i> <i>n-seweicha-a</i> 3S-ripen-NPST 'It ripens.' {DescTab.037}	<i>tüwü</i> <i>tüwü</i> 3:SG <i>yaawö.</i> <i>yaawö</i> then

Overt arguments are not frequent in naturally occurring speech (in a sample of 530 clauses of which 305 were verbal, only 41% contained a noun or a free pronoun referring to one of the arguments). Thus, in most main clauses, indexing on the verb is the only reference to its core arguments.

That said, Set I clauses in which free pronouns or other nominal expressions are used to refer to the core arguments and, in elicitation, there is a preference for the OV(A)/SV order, with only occasional occurrences of (A)VO/VS.

Contrary to the rest of Cariban languages which also preserved this verbal system, word order has no effect on person indexing. While in other languages preverbal O prevents person indexing on the verb, this is not the case in Ye'kwana. Thus, third person indexing is the same whether

nominal expressions referring to the O precede (3a) or follow the verb (3b).

- | | | | | | |
|--------|---|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| | O | | V | | A |
| (3) a. | <i>Anedawö</i> | <i>wa'shadi</i> | <i>n-ejodü-a=to</i> | | <i>tünwanno.</i> |
| | other.time | tapir | 3/3-find-NPST=PL | | 3PL |
| | 'Sometimes they (the dogs) find tapir.' {DescCaz.073} | | | | |
| | A | | V | | O |
| b. | <i>Kanno</i> | <i>wodinñamo-'kö</i> | <i>n-ei-jötü-a=to</i> | <i>mödö</i> | <i>tuna yaawö.</i> |
| | kanno | wodinñamo-'kö | n-ei-jötü-a=to | mödö | tuna yaawö |
| | 3AN:PX:PL | women-DIM | 3/3-get-PLAC-NPST=PL | 3IN:MD | water Then |
| | 'The girls are getting the water.' {DescPared.013} | | | | |

Number marking is carried out with two different plural morphemes depending on the person of the arguments of the verb. A suffix *-tö* that precedes TAM inflection (4) is used to refer exclusively to Speech Act Participants (SAP) while a clitic *=to* that follows TAM inflection (3a-b, above) is used for third person or with those TAM markers for which the plural distinction based on person has been lost (*i.e.* for the non-past and the recent past imperfective).

- | | | | |
|-----|---|--------------------------|------------------|
| (4) | <i>Yööje-'da-ane</i> | <i>k-ennejenka-tö-ne</i> | <i>künwanno.</i> |
| | thus-NEG-INTS | 1+2S-grow-SAP.PL-DPP | 1+2PL |
| | 'We didn't grow this way.' {ConvChur.439} | | |

Importantly, the only bare nouns that can appear in a Set I clause are the core arguments (A, S, O). Other participants (non-core arguments) have to be marked with the multifunctional case marker *=uwö*, as in (5a) (*cf.* 4.2.2 for other uses), or another postposition (5b-c).

- | | | | | | |
|--------|---|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| (5) a. | <i>“Eduwa kaajoja”</i> | <i>künö'düaakö</i> | <i>tüweichakono</i> | <i>uwö</i> | <i>yaawö.</i> |
| | eduwa k^ajojo-a | kün-ö'dü-aakö | t-weichakono-Ø | =uwö | yaawö |
| | now 1+2A-touch-NPST | 3S:DIS-talk-DPI | 3CF-friend-POS | =DAT | then |
| | “Now we grab him” he said to his friends then.’ {CtoTigMor.031} | | | | |
| b. | <i>Mödöjemma</i> | <i>wöonetüi</i> | <i>chöjökkö</i> | <i>yaawö.</i> | |
| | mödöje=mma | ^wönetü-i | chö-jökkö | yaawö | |
| | thus=EXCL | 1S-dream-RPP | 3-about | then | |
| | 'Thus I dreamt about her. ' {DescSno.011} | | | | |
| c. | <i>¡Küjaa!</i> | <i>kaado-no=janño</i> | <i>Kajussawa=je</i> | <i>m-e'tö-i</i> | <i>che.</i> |
| | darn | tasty-NZR=really | Kajussawa=ESS | 2A-name-RPP | FRUST |
| | ‘¡Darn! You called that tasty thing “ Kajussawa ” (evil spirit).’ {IvwCti.107} | | | | |

2.2. Person indexing on Set I clauses

Person indexing in the finite verb system is best understood as a set of prefixes originally organized in three subsets: (i) consonantal prefixes that index the A argument when the O argument is a third person for transitive verbs and the S argument of a subset of intransitive verbs that are originally detransitivized stems, (ii) a majority of vocalic prefixes that index the O argument when the A is third person on transitive verbs and the S argument of the basic intransitive verbs and (iii) portmanteau prefixes that index interactions between SAP arguments (local scenarios). Gildea (2012) reconstructs a system such as the one one in Table 1 to Proto-Cariban. Given the distribution of the indexes in terms of argument roles, Gildea labels the system as Inverse for transitive verbs and as Split Intransitive for intransitive verbs.

	A/Sa	O/So	1A2O/2A1O
1	*t- *w-	*u-j-	
2	*m	*ô-j-	
1+2	*kit-	*k-	*k-
3	*∅- *n-	*i-	

Table 1. Proto-Cariban person indexing on verbs (Gildea 2012)

In Ye'kwana, the boundaries between the subsets have been blurred by time. As illustrated in Table 2, the use of some prefixes has extended into other domains (*e.g.* first person A/DETR S w(i)- is now also used for some basic intransitive verbs), for one prefix, its functional domain has shrunk (*i.e.* the inclusive k(i)^- prefix that indexes A does not index detransitive S), and a new prefix has emerged (*i.e.* mön(i)-/man- index when second person is the O in local scenarios). Reflexes of the three subsets of person prefixes now distribute differently among the different argument roles that a Set I verb indexes. They can be represented in a three column table in which person indexes for interactions between SAP and third person (non-local scenarios) now have a boundary that is fractured.

Non-local and mixed scenarios				Local scenarios
	A	DETR S	INTR. S	O
1		w(i)-		ü-/(y)^-
2		m(i)-		ö(y)-/a(y)-
1+2	k(i)^-		k(ü)-	
3		n(i)-/kün-/kin(i)-/i-		
1+3		nña n(i)-		nña Ø-

Table 2. Person indexing on Ye'kwana finite verb stems⁴

The indexing system in Ye'kwana Set I clauses is thus based on a person hierarchy for mixed scenarios and intransitively split (see Cáceres Arandia 2011: § 4.3.1, § 4.5.1) based on the morphological origin of the intransitive verb and not based on a semantic split as in more known cases (see for Ye'kwana Cáceres Arandia [2011: 130] and Jiménez Velázquez [2019: 96-99], and for Cariban, Meira [2000]).

We now turn to the description of the morphosyntax present in other types of clauses.

3. Sources of the imperfective clause morphology and syntax

The imperfective construction at the center of this paper presents the same argument structure as the action nominalization that is suffixed with *-dii*. Constructions with this form out of context can be translated as a verb nominalization or as a finite imperfective clause⁵. In terms of indexing, the notional absolutive arguments (S and O) are expressed as prefixes as shown in (6a-b).

⁴ Consonant initial prefixes take an epenthetic vowel with consonant initial stems (C- → CV- / #C-stem) while vowel initial prefixes take an epenthetic palatal approximant with vowel initial stems (V- → Vy- / #V-stem), except for the third person allomorph *i-*. Stress shift cannot occur when the first syllable of the stem is heavy. See cáceres (2011: § 4.3) for more on the allomorphy.

⁵ In a discourse context, however, it is clear most of the time whether the verbal form with *-dii* is the verbal predicate of an eventive clause or whether it is being used in a function possible for nouns (*i.e.* argument, object of postposition, nominal predicate). The gloss of the morpheme reflects the function of the verb in the construction it is a part of: IPFV 'imperfective' for its verbal eventive uses and NZR 'nominalizer' for its nominal uses.

- (6) a. *Ay-edantö-dii*
2O-find-NZR/IPFV
'The finding of you' or '[Someone] is finding you'.
- b. *A-w-eja'ka-dii*
2S-INTR-go.out-NZR/IPFV
'Your going out' or 'You are going out'.

If the absolutive arguments are explicitly mentioned with a pronoun or an independent nominal expression, these precede the verb and are morphologically unmarked. Additionally, for intransitive stems, person indexing does not co-occur with a preceding third person nominal expression as in (7a) (there is however, on vowel-initial stems, an obligatory class prefix *w-* 'INTR' which occurs on all intransitive nominalizations [Cáceres Arandia 2011: 200-202]) whereas person indexing on transitives is obligatory even when the (notional) O argument precedes the verb (7b).

- (7) a. *Wamedi* *w-eetüümü-dii.*
chicken INTR-sing-NZR/IPFV
'The singing of the rooster' or 'The rooster is singing'.
- b. *Tonodo* *t-üjjö-dii.*
bird 3O-shoot-NZR/IPFV
'The shooting of birds' or '[Someone] is shooting birds'.

In contrast with the plural marking shown in 2.1 where number is expressed differently for SAP and third person, with the action nominals and in the imperfective system plural number is indicated with only one morpheme, the enclitic =*komo* illustrated in (8a) for a third person O and in (8b) for a second person S.

- (8) a. *Yanwaa=komo* *Ø-ajöi-jötü-dii=komo.*
man=PL 3O-grab-PLAC-NZR/IPFV=PL
'The grabbing of the men' or '[Someone] is grabbing the men'.
- b. *Öttödükomo.*
ö-w-ütö(mö)-dü=**komo**
2S-INTR-go-NZR/IPFV=PL
'Your [PL] going' or 'You [PL] are going'.

In fact, the form of the person indexes and the plural, and the complementary distribution between the S and the corresponding prefix is similar to the morphosyntactic characteristics of possession.

Thus, to understand the source of the morphology and syntax used in this system, it is necessary to turn to the morphosyntax of possession.

3.1. The morphosyntax of possession

The morphosyntax of action nominalizations is the same as that observed in possessive phrases. The characteristics of the latter are illustrated in this section.

At the morphological level, the possessed noun is marked with a suffix *-dii* (9a) or *-i* (9b) which indicates its possessed status (the construct form of the noun in Creissel's [2016] terms). The possessed noun also indexes the person of the possessor with a prefix (see Table 3 for possessor allomorphy) and is marked with the plural enclitic *=komo* if there is more than one possessor.

- (9) a. *Ö-wokii-dii=komo.*
 2PSR-drink-POS=PL
 'Your [2PL] drinks'
 b. *Ö-simada-i=chomo.*
 2PSR-arrow-POS=PL
 'Your [2PL] arrows'

When nominally expressed, the possessor is left unmarked, as in (10a) and (11a) and, conservatively precedes the possessed noun. The possessed noun cannot bear the third person prefix when the possessor precedes it, as shown in (10b) and (11b).

- | | | | | | | |
|------|----|---|--|----|---|--|
| (10) | a. | <i>Wodi'chö</i>
wodi-'kö
woman-DIM
'The girl's arm.' | <i>ajödii</i>
ajö-dü
arm-POS | b. | <i>*Wodi'chö</i>
wodi-'kö
woman-DIM | <i>yajödii.</i>
y-ajö-dü
3PSR-arm-POS |
| (11) | a. | <i>Kawadi</i>
kawadi
deer
'The deer's story.' | <i>wotunnöi.</i>
wotunnö-i
story-POS | b. | <i>*Kawadi</i>
kawadi
deer | <i>yootunnöi.</i>
i-wotunnö-i
3PSR-story-POS |

Lastly, at least with SAP pronouns in the corpus, the possessor is also sometimes expressed after the possessed noun, as in (12). This differs from the strict [possessor possessed] order reported for the rest of the family (Gildea 1998: 105).

(12)	<i>Mödö</i>	<i>iyö</i>	<i>köödöichü</i>	<i>ewü.</i>
	mödö	iyö	^ködöi-dü	ewü
	3IN:MD	3IN:INV	1PSR-sickness-POS	1SG
	'That is my worry {lit. sickness}' {ConvChur.196}			

Each of the person prefixes used in possession presents different allomorphs which depend on the first segment of the stem, the moraic weight of the first syllable, and whether the first vowel presents an ablaut-type alternation between a front and a back grade (Cáceres Arandia 2011, 2018). Importantly, as can be seen in Table 3 for the lines in bold, there are three different forms for third person: the standalone form for when the possessor does not precede the possessum '3SG', another form with no prefix for when the possessor precedes the possessum 'N(noun)' and a form for when third person is co-referential with a controlling argument in the same, main or adjacent clause '3CF'. This form with no prefix is also used when the possessor is the first person exclusive (1+3). Number is marked independently of person⁶. The clitic =*komo* indexes plurality of the possessor of inanimate nouns, but can also indicate plurality of the possessed (Cáceres Arandia 2011: 115).

Contrary to person indexing on finite verbs which can be seen as divided in three subsets (*cf.* 2.2), the set of person indexes used in possessive constructions does not present any subdivisions. The allomorphs of each person prefix are morphophonologically conditioned (Cáceres Arandia 2011: 167-197).

	Vowel initial stems				Consonant initial stems		
			ablaut stems				
	light	heavy	light	heavy	light	heavy	#CC
1SG	y [^] -	y-	y [^] -[e]	y-[e]	^-	Ø-	ü-
2SG	öy-	öy-	ay-[e]	ay-[e]	ö-	ö-	ö-
3SG	y-	y-	ch [^] -[ə]	ch-[ə]	^-[pal.]	Ø-[pal.]	i-[pal.]
1+2	k-	k-	k-[ə]	k-[ə]	kü-	kü-	kü-
3CF	t-	t-	t-[ə]	t-[ə]	tü-	tü-	tü-
1+3	nña=	nña=	nña=[e]	nña=[e]	nña=	nña=	nña=
N(oun)	N=	N=	N=[e]	N=[e]	N=	N=	N=

Table 3. Possessor indexing allomorphy according to first syllable type

⁶ Number marking in Ye'kwana has the potential of being marked on verbs, nouns and adverbs, and in a clause, if number is indicated at all, it occurs preferably on the predicate (verbal or non-verbal).

This set of person prefixes is largely similar to the set of prefixes used for indexing the notional S and O arguments on all verbal nominalizations. This means that these deverbal forms have a three-way distinction for indexing third person (*cf.* lines in bold in Table 3), by contrast to one way of indexing purely third person interactions in Set I clauses (*cf.* Table 2). The only differences in allomorphy between possessed nouns and verbal nominalizations, already at the stage of nominalization, are that the imperfective never presents an ablaut alternation, no *ch^h*- allomorphs for third person, vowel initial verb stems take \emptyset - instead of *y*- third person and a subset of transitive roots have *t(i)*- instead of \emptyset -/*i*-/[palatalization] for third person (Cáceres Arandia 2011: 127-128)⁷.

Beyond person indexing, other characteristics of the imperfective construction are similar to the syntax of non-verbal predication. These are shown in the next section.

3.2. Non-verbal predication

As pointed out in the introduction, the imperfective construction resembles structurally a clause with a nominal predicate. This section illustrates the characteristics of non-verbal predicates in Ye'kwana to show the specific structure of the clause that could be the source of the innovative imperfective construction.

3.2.1. Non-verbal predication without a copula

In discourse, it is possible to predicate something of a subject by juxtaposition of a non-verb word (noun [13a], adverb [13b] or postpositional phrase [13c]) to a noun or a pronoun in the order [predicate subject].

⁷ Additionally, since all vowel initial intransitive stems are marked with a class prefix *w*-, third person on intransitive verbs never has a vowel-initial stem even though there are vowel initial roots.

- (13) a. *Yanwa* *tüwü.*
 man 3SG
 ‘It [is] a boy.’ {ConvEnf.001}
- b. *Maadö* *tüwü* *i-jata-dü.*
 there 3SG 3PSR-village-POS
 ‘His village [is] over there’ {CtoKms.697}
- c. *Y-akka* *iyö* *yaawö*
 3-inside 3IN:INV thus
 ‘That [was] inside it.’ {CtoKms.451}

Nominalized adverbs (14a) and postpositional phrases (14b) are also found as nominal predicates without a copula.

- (14) a. *çAjadono* *tüwü* *yaawö?*
 a-jadö-**no** tüwü yaawö
 2-with-NZR 3SG then
 ‘[Is] she [the one] with you (*i.e.* does she live with you)?’ {DescTab.109}
- b. *Unwaa-no* *mödö.*
 there-NZR 3IN:MD
 ‘That [is] (one) from there.’ {ConvChurB.53}

Additionally, there is a wide range of productive deverbal nominalizations which are also found in these constructions in predicate function. Examples (15a-b) illustrate two different deverbal nominalizations *-dü* ‘action nominalizer’ and *-tojo* ‘circumstantial nominalizer’.

- (15) a. *Ewü* *ewü* *ye'kwana* *watamedüüwü.*
 ewü ewü ye'kwana w-atame-**dü** ewü
 1SG 1SG ye'kwana INTR-run.out-NZR 1SG
 ‘Me, I am the last Ye’kwana (*lit.* the ending of Ye’kwana).’ {HistAna.150:Ana}
- b. *A-w-entatü'-tojo* *mödö* *yaawö.*
 2S-INTR-rinse.mouth-CIRC 3IN:MD Then
 ‘That is your mouth rinse.’ {CtoAbjPic.054:FcM}

Note that, in discourse, the subject of these non-verbal constructions can be omitted and thus, a noun or an adverbial by itself is sometimes a predicative construction for which the subject can be recovered from context as in (16).

- (16) *Iyö* *nün'ato* *yaawö.*
 iyö =nün'e-ato yaawö
 3IN:INV =similar-NZR then
 '[The swept part is] similar to that one.' {CtoMdwk.030}

Gildea (1998: ch. 9) has shown that the source of many of the innovative constructions found across the Cariban family can be traced back to a non-verbal construction in which the verbal nominalization is the predicate and the subject a pleonastic inanimate pronoun. This possibility is evaluated for the imperfective construction in Ye'kwana in Section 4.2. However, although in discourse adverbial and postpositional phrases occur most frequently without a copula, in elicitation most speakers claim that the clause is incomplete if the copula is not used. Crucially, nominal expressions generally cannot function as the complement of a copula without first being adverbialized (but see section 5.3.2 for a further innovation involving the imperfective construction). Relevant characteristics of copular predication are illustrated in the next section.

3.2.2. Non-verbal predication with a copula

For Cariban languages, it is useful to consider copular predication along non-verbal predication as both are used for the expression of the same predicative functions. However, predication with a copula is only possible with an adverbial or postpositional predicate. Examples in (17) illustrate typical Cariban copular constructions with a basic adverb (17a) and a postpositional phrase in (17b) where the copula is indexed with a prefix in reference to the subject⁸. Throughout the family, the copula usually presents two or three suppletive allomorphs (*a~a'ja~ei*, in Ye'kwana).

⁸ Adverbs can be identified as a separate class from nouns and verbs based on inflectional morphology (number, person and negation). Even though the class includes most property concepts, these are classified as adverbs rather than adjectives because they cannot function as adnominal modifiers unless they are nominalized (see Meira and Gildea [2009] for Cariban and [Cáceres Arandia 2011: 137] for Ye'kwana).

- (17) a. *Seweiche* *ödinñö* *n-a*.
 red.ADV pot 3S-COP:NPST
 ‘The pot is red’ {IvwCti.410}
- b. *Kuwajudu* =*nña* *m-a'ja-akene* *jenadö* *¿yöjünka?*
 Kuwajudu =in 2S-COP-DPI before right?
 ‘You were in Kuwajudu before, isn’t it?’ {ConvChur.244: Anl}

On the other hand, nouns need to be part of a postpositional phrase (18a) or be derived into adverbs (18b) in order to function as the predicate in a copular construction.

- (18) a. *Ñöödö* *kajichaana=je* *kün-a'ja-akö*.
 3AN:INV chief=ESS 3S:DIS-COP-DPI
 ‘That one was the chief.’ {CtoMdwk.077}
- b. *Tü-menu-ke-'da* *mödö* *n-a*
 PROP-spot-PROP-NEG 3IN:MD 3S-COP:NPST
 ‘That one does not have spots.’ {Ivw1erTej.050}

Meira and Gildea (2009: 127) suggest that, etymologically, the copula was a locative verb *eti ‘dwell’ that took adverbial modifiers instead of true complements. In Ye’kwana, the copular construction still behaves as an intransitive verb in that it does not allow a nominal complement unless it has been derived into an adverb or is the object of a postposition.

In the copular construction, the subject can also be omitted as in (19).

- (19) *Wodi=je* *kün-a'ja-akö* *awa'de-ene*
 woman=ESS 3S:DIS-COP-DPI first-INTS
 ‘[The bee] was a woman first.’ {CtoAbjPic.093:Anl}

In sum, there are two types of non-verbal predication in Ye’kwana whose use depends on the lexical category of the predicate: a copula can be used only if the predicate is an adverbial while nominals can only be used as predicates without the copula. This concludes the introduction of features of Ye’kwana grammar which are necessary to have in mind to understand the structure of the innovative clause described in the rest of the paper.

4. The innovated main clause imperfective

In the Ye'kwana corpus of spontaneous speech (of around 5,000 clauses), alongside the main clause system inherited from Proto-Cariban, there are 441 clauses marked with a reflex of the imperfective action nominalization *-dii* and translated as main clauses with a range of imperfective aspect values (*cf.* 5.2). The morphology of these imperfective main clauses is much of the same as the morphology in possession (*cf.* 3.1). This section presents a detailed account of the morphosyntactic characteristics of this construction (4.1) and the possible analysis of its origins (4.2).

4.1. The morphosyntax of the imperfective

The morphosyntactic characteristics of the imperfective construction pertain to indexing and nominal expression of arguments (4.1.1), word order (4.1.2) and an accompanying particle (4.1.3).

4.1.1. Person indexing and nominal expression of arguments

The morphological characteristics of the imperfective main clause contrast with the characteristics of the Set I finite clauses as summarized in Table 4:

	Set I	Imperfective (Set II)
Person indexing	S, A, O	S, O
Set of prefixes	subdivided	unique
Plural inflexion	<i>-tö, =to</i>	<i>=komo</i>
Semantics expressed	tense (and aspect) or mood	aspect

Table 4. Comparison of Set I and Set II main clauses

In terms of overt expression of arguments, co-occurrence of the nominal expression with the person index presents different conditions for transitive and intransitive verbs. In intransitive constructions –as in adnominal possession– the person index does not co-occur with a preceding noun referring to the S argument as shown in (20a) in contrast with (20b)⁹.

⁹ Younger speakers have started regularizing the co-occurrence of the person index in elicitation.

- (20) a. *Wa'to udinñü waajöichü ödinñö jona.*
 wa'to udinñü w-aajöi-dü ödinñö =jona
 wood flame:POS INTR-hold.on-IPFV pot =against
 'The flames of the wood stick onto the pot.' {IvwCti.471}
- b. **Wa'to udinñü yaajöichü ödinñö jona.*
 wa'to udinñü i-w-aajöi-dü ödinñö =jona
 wood flame:POS INTR-hold.on-IPFV pot =against

In transitive constructions, on the other hand, the person index is always present, whether the O argument precedes the verb (21a) or not (21b). This behavior follows what is observed in Ye'kwana Set I clauses (ex. 3a-b) but is unlike the rest of the family for constructions with etymological deverbal nominalizations, where, at least for third person, the person index is in complementary distribution with nominal expressions referring to the O immediately preceding the verb (Gildea 1998: 19). This behavior is only evident with consonant initial roots (through palatalization) and *t*-roots (*cf.* Table 3).

- (21) a. *Yootonno yaawö yuduwa ñüüdü yaawö.*
 yootonno yaawö **yuduwa** i-mü-dü yaawö
 after then tree.SP 3O-tie-IPFV then
 'One ties the yuduwa (leaves) afterwards.' {DescPared.009}
- b. [Chanting] *ke t-üdü-jötü-dü möötö yaawö.*
 QUOT 3O-bless-PLAC-IPFV there then
 '[Chanting] like this one blesses it there.' {CtoKms.681}

Furthermore, the A argument of transitive imperfective constructions is never indexed on the verb. When overtly expressed, the A argument is marked with the postposition *uwö*, glossed 'ERGATIVE' in this construction. As the rest of the postpositions in the language, the ergative postposition cliticizes to its nominal complement as in (22a) or takes a person prefix as in (22b). When the referent of the A argument is plural, the postposition takes the postpositional (and adverbial) plural suffix *-nñe*.

- | | | | | |
|------|----|---|----------------------|-----------------|
| | | A=ERG | | V |
| (22) | a. | <i>Ñöödö</i> | <i>uwö</i> | <i>enajüdü.</i> |
| | | <i>ñöödö</i> | = uwö | Ø-enajü-dü |
| | | 3AN:INV | =ERG | 3O-swallow-IPFV |
| | | ‘That one swallowed it.’ {CtoYude.080: Mnl} | | |
| | | o-V | A-ERG | O |
| | b. | <i>Emadü</i> | <i>chöuwönñe</i> | <i>iyö.</i> |
| | | Ø-ema-dü | chö- uwö -nñe | iyö |
| | | 3O-throw-IPFV | 3-ERG-PL | 3IN:INV |
| | | ‘They threw that away.’ {CtoMdwk.160} | | |

4.1.2. Word order

In intransitive clauses, contrary to possessive phrases, the S argument is also found following the verb when it is third person. In this case the third person index is necessary, as illustrated in example (23) below.

- | | | | | |
|------|--|-------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| | TIME | s-V | S | LOC |
| (23) | <i>Anedawö</i> | <i>yeejüdükomo</i> | <i>sotto</i> | <i>ödüinña</i> |
| | anedawö | i -w-ejö-dü=komo | sotto | ö-düinña |
| | other.time | 3S-INTR-come-IPFV=PL | people | 2-at.person |
| | ‘Sometimes people come to where you are.’ {ConvChur.344} | | | |

Note, however, that more than half of the imperfective intransitive clauses in the spontaneous corpus do not express the S argument nominally. The cases in which the S is overtly expressed, the S precedes the verb at least three times more than it follows the verb.

In general, as for the main clauses of the hierarchical system, overt arguments in transitive clauses are expressed with an overt nominal expression less than half of the time. For imperfective transitive clauses in the spontaneous corpus (224 total), the A argument was only overtly expressed in six clauses. These were all third person A and in all but one, the A was found post verbally, and, in the one clause in which both A and O were expressed, the order was VAO as in (22b) above. Elicited examples as (24), however, did show OVA word order, which is the order Gildea (1998) reconstructs for the cognate constructions (called Set II) as well as for the Set I constructions.

	O		o-V		A-ERG
(24)	<i>Simada</i>	<i>ejudu</i>	<i>tüdüdü</i>	<i>mödö</i>	<i>üuwö</i>
	simada	oju-dü	t-üdü-dü	mödö	ü-uwö
	arrow	handle-POS	3O-make-IPFV	3IN:MD	1SG-ERG
	'I'm making a/the bow.' {ELIC_Mrcb.Aux.082}				

When only the O is expressed, OV is at least twice as frequent as VO, for all types of main clauses, including this imperfective clause.

Given that, unlike in the Set I, imperfective clauses never allow indexation of the A on the verb, in all transitive clauses without a nominal expression referring to the A argument, the identity of the A has to be recovered from the context. For instance, in (25), the A of the imperfective construction is the same as the A of the Set I clause preceding it.

	A-V		oblique		O
(25)	<i>Waijooa</i>	<i>yaawö,</i>	<i>wa'to</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>ñöödö</i>
	w-aijoo-a	yaawö	wa'to	=ke	ñöödö
	1A-smoke-NPST	then	wood	=INSTR	3AN:INV
					<i>jakiya,</i>
					jakiya
					peccary
	[co-predicate]	O	O-V		
	<i>taichüe</i>	<i>ñöödö</i>	<i>aminñö'kadü.</i>		
	t-aichü-e	ñöödö	Ø-aminñö'ka- dü		
	AZR-put.in-CVB	3AN:INV	3O-kill-IPFV		
	'I send smoke with wood to that peccary, (I) kill it trapped.' {DescCaz.086-7}				

Note that in example (24) shown above, there is an unmarked inanimate demonstrative pronoun *mödö* following the verb which is not labeled as an argument. This is the topic of the next section.

4.1.3. An extra pronoun tagging along

In 29 of the 441 imperfective clauses there is an inanimate pronoun *mödö* immediately following the verb. When the referent of the S or O argument is inanimate and not overtly expressed elsewhere, this *mödö* could be analyzed as the S as in (26a) or the O as in (26b).

- (26) a. s-V (S)
Yaatamedü mödö.
 i-w-atame-dü mödö
 3S-INTR-run.out-IPFV 3IN:MD
 ‘It’s running out.’ {ConvChurB.551}
- b. o-V (O) A-ERG
T-üdü-dü-jünü mödö chö-uwö.
 3O-put-IPFV-NEG 3IN:MD 3-ERG
 ‘She’s not imposing it (on us).’ {ConvChur.036}

On the other hand, in the absence of an inanimate S or O argument, the inanimate pronoun *mödö* cannot be interpreted as referring to one of the arguments of the verbs, as illustrated in (27a-b).

- (27) a. ADV S V ?
Mmm, akud=a'ye, nña w-etadawokajo-dü mödö.
 mmm wait=shortly 1+3 INTR-work-IPFV 3IN:MD
 ‘Yes, wait a moment, we’re working’ {CtoKms.087}
- b. o-V ? A-ERG
Yoowanomadü mödö chöuwö.
 y^-owanoma-dü mödö chö-uwö
 1O-teach-IPFV 3IN:MD 3-ERG
 ‘He is teaching me.’ {ELIC_Sno.Elt.013}

These cases in which the inanimate pronoun is present in the construction without a corresponding referent are structurally similar to non-verbal predicate constructions without a copula (*cf.* 3.2.1). This fact points us to the source of the imperfective construction: non-verbal predication.

4.2. Origins of the main clause imperfective construction

Across the family, the source of cognates of the imperfective construction is already well understood (Gildea 1998: 161-168). This source involves an imperfective action nominalization that takes ergative morphosyntax, indexing the S and the O arguments. The etymological function of the pieces that went into making this construction in Ye’kwana are presented in this section.

4.2.1. The action nominalization as a nominal predicate

Section 3 showed the imperfective action nominalization (the *-dii* form of the verb) is possessed by the notional S and O arguments and allows the optional expression of a notional A as an oblique (dative). As other nouns, this nominalization can occur as the predicate of a predicate nominal clause, with the subject being a demonstrative pronoun (in the case of Ye'kwana, the medial inanimate pronoun *mödö* 'that'). This is found in 17 examples in the spontaneous corpus as in (28a-b) below.

- (28) a. *Iyö denña maane mödö, t-üdü-dii-üne mödö.*
 3IN:INV REIT RECTIF 3IN:MD 3O-do-NZR-INTS 3IN:MD
 'That's what [we] are doing.' (*lit.* 'That's it. That's its doing.')
- [O-V-NZR]_{PRED} SUBJ
- b. *¿Muttu w-aanontö-dii mödö yaawö mödöje?*
 bird.SP INTR-command-NZR 3IN:MD then thus
 'Is that muttu's command? (*lit.* is that muttu's commanding).'
- [S V-NZR]_{PRED} SUBJ

Being a nominal predicate, it would be expected that other third person inanimate pronouns could be expressed as the subject of this construction. However, in elicitation, for constructions formulated with the proximal demonstrative *edö* instead of the medial *mödö*, speakers indicated that they could not identify what the intended meaning of the utterance would be.

Nevertheless, it was shown that subjects of non-verbal predicates can be omitted (*cf.* 3.2.1). Unsurprisingly then, the etymological function of the imperfective construction can also be found with the missing source subject, as in (29a-b).

- (29) a. *Kiyedaka öttödii jenñemma.*
 kiyede=aka ö-w-ütö(mö)-dii =jenñemma
 manioc=in 2S-INTR-go-NZR =maybe
 '[It] could be your going to the manioc [field].' {DescCaz.003:AnRo} (in the context of speakers negotiating a topic to record)
- b. *Mö'dö anontöjötüdü üuwö.*
 mö'dö Ø-anontö-jötü-dii ü-uwö
 3AN:PX 3O-command-PLAC-NZR 1SG-DAT
 'He is/was the one I sent (on errands) various times. (*lit.* [it is] the repeated sending of that one (animate) by me)' {ELIC:ExpTab_Elt.093}

Thus, the absence of *mödö* is not specific to the innovative verbal function of the construction. Instead, with *mödö*, the main clause interpretation seems to be facilitated as the first translation volunteered for all examples tried in elicitation was a verbal clause and not a non verbal predicate. Hence, it appears the construction has been reanalyzed: the erstwhile nominalization now functions as a main clause verb, even in the presence of morphological residue of the erstwhile inanimate subject.

4.2.2. A multifunctional case marker for the A argument

In terms of the origin of the case marking of the A argument in the imperfective construction, the postposition *uwö* [w:ə] which serves as case marking for the A argument in Ye'kwana is found in many other functions. It is frequently used with the addressee of direct or reported speech (30a), the recipient (30b) or the experiencer (30c).

- (30) a. *Ke sottouwönñe künö'daakö Kamasi*
 ke sotto=**uwö**-nñe kün-ö'dü-aakö Kamashi
 QUOT person=DAT-PL 3S:DIS-talk-DPI Kamasi
 'Thus said Kamasi to the people.' {CtoKms.575}
- b. *Kamasiuwö kuntui chenña yaawö.*
 Kamashi=**uwö** kün-utu-i de'a yaawö
 Kamasi=DAT 3/3:PST-give-PST again then
 'He gave it again to Kamasi.' {CtoKms.297}
- c. *Tünonñe ü-uwö.*
 dangerous 1SG-DAT
 'I am afraid of them.' (*lit.* '[they are] dangerous to me.')

It is also used in constructions in which the valency has been increased to include a causee (31a) or decreased and the speaker wishes to express the erstwhile A (31b).

- (31) a. *T-önöö-jo-'se-'da w-öönene ü-nna=komo=**uwö** ñöödö.*
 3O-eat.meat-CAUS-DESID-NEG 1A-AUX:HAB 1PSR-child=PL=DAT 3AN:INV
 'I don't want to make my kids eat that one.' {ConvChurB.368}
- b. *¿Ne'köömü yöönedü öuwö?*
 ane'köömü i-w-ööne-dü ö-uwö
 INTER.IN 3S-INTR-DETR:see-NZR 2-DAT
 'What do you see?' (*lit.* 'What is seen by you?')

In a few instances, *uwö* occurs to indicate a possessor with a possessive predicate (the *mihi* est type) as in (32).

- (32) *Mö'dö=uwö* *kün-a'ja-akö* *tiw-ei-ye* *mmaja* *yaawö*.
 3AN:PX=DAT 3S:DIS-COP-DPI PTCP-COP-PTCP also then
 'This one also had it.' {lit. 'It was also to this one.'} {CtoCti.394}

Gildea's (1998: 123) claim for the marker on the A is that, since the possessor of the nominalization is already taken by the O for transitive verbs, the A can only form a syntactic relationship to the noun with an adposition –in most of the family, a reflex of the Proto-Carib goal/dative **wi*ya. In Ye'kwana, the postposition *uwö*, unlike the majority of postpositions in the language and despite its multifunctionality, never has a locative use. Instead, it is only used for adjunct elements which have a semantic prominent role and are not easily assimilated to a location. We now turn to syntactic evidence of reanalysis of the pieces of this construction.

4.2.3. Reanalysis and subject properties

Reanalysis of constructions cognate to the Ye'kwana imperfective construction with *-dü* are found in other Cariban languages with a variety of aspectual or tense labels. In Kuikuru *-lii* is glossed 'punctual', in Makushi, Pemón and Kapóng *-Ø* is glossed 'universal/present tense', in Panare *n* is glossed 'nonspecific aspect', in Katxúyana *-ri* is glossed as 'imperfective' (Gildea 1998), and in Kari'nja *-ry* is glossed as progressive aspect (Sapién 2017). Even though each case presents strong evidence of paradigmatic and/or pragmatic reanalysis (*cf.* section 5 for Ye'kwana), irrefutable syntactic evidence of reanalysis has only been clearly shown in Panare and in Kari'nja.

In Panare, Gildea (1998: 156) uses three criteria to determine that some of the morphosyntax of nouns has been lost in the innovative construction (i) optionality of the copula, (ii) possibility of having the erstwhile possessor in post-possessum position and (iii) differing prefixes from those seen in possession. None of these criteria applied to Ye'kwana separate the uses of absolutive *-dü* forms in non-verbal predication from the eventive uses. On the other hand, the criteria found by Sapién (2017: 228) for

Kari'nja based on adverbial modification and evidence of a syntactic S/A subject can also be used in Ye'kwana to argue for syntactic reanalysis of the former nominal predicate into a verbal predicate.

The argument for adverbial modification is even stronger in Ye'kwana. Indeed, the imperfective takes various types of adverbial dependent clauses some of which are only possible with an eventive main clause. Example (33) below illustrates a manner dependent which repeats the stem of the main verb of which there were seven occurrences with an imperfective main clause in procedural texts¹⁰.

- (33) *Sookadii, tamö amödü, inchanñantödü.*
 Ø-sooka-dü t-amö-e Ø-amö-dü i-nkanñantö-dü
 3O-pierce-IPFV ADV-build-PTCP 3O-build-IPFV 3O-put.leaves-IPFV
 'Piercing, roofing by roofing, one puts the leaves.' {DescTecho.036}

Concerning subject properties, if the verb with *-dü* were still a nominalization, then the subject of all the imperfective examples from section 4.1.3 with the inanimate medial demonstrative *mödö* would be the demonstrative. In contrast, if the verb with *-dü* has been reanalysed, then we would expect the subject of the imperfective clause to be one of the core participants of the imperfective verb: for intransitive verbs, the S, and for transitive verbs the A¹¹.

Subject properties in Cariban languages are generally quite limited (*cf.* Hoff 1995: 362, Gildea 1997: 179-182, 1998: 154-160). Candidates in Ye'kwana are (i) control of coreference with a third person reflexive possessive prefix *t-* and (ii) control of coreference with the zero subject (S/A) of an immediately conjoined clause.

There is evidence that the A and the S control the coreferential third person index *t-* in the same clause (34a) and a subordinate clause (34b).

¹⁰ Taking all main clause types together, there are 21 repeated manner complements in the corpus. The specific function of these "redundant" manner subordinates has yet to be determined. Speakers' intuitions point to an emphatic function for verbs. Mattei Muller (personal communication) reports something similar for Panare. Although the imperfective construction occurs also with two different types of purpose dependents (2 count) and three types of temporal dependents (10 count), these presumably could also accompany a non-verbal predicate.

¹¹ In the cognate construction in Makushi, Akawaio, and Kuikuru, the subject is the morphologically absolutive S plus ergative A (Gildea 1998, Franchetto 2010).

- (34) a. *Tünootiitonkomo* *aminñö'kadü.*
t-nootü-ton=komo \emptyset -aminñö'ka-dü
 3CF-grand.mother-PL.AN=PL 3O-kill-IPFV
 ‘[They_i] killed their_i grandmother.’ {CManYude.131}
- b. *Iye aka yoomomüdü nade'a mö'dö Jakiya*
 iye =aka i-w-oomomü-dü n-a=de'a mö'dö Jakiya
 stick =in 3S-INTR-enter-IPFV 3S-COP:NPST=REIT 3AN:INV Peccary
anedawö töwüttü'je'da yeichawö.
 anedawö **t**-öwattö='je'da i-w-ei-dawö
 sometimes 3CF-home.POS=NEG.EXIST 3S-INTR-COP-WHEN
 ‘The peccary enters a trunk sometimes when it does not find its home.’
 {DescCaz.102}

And there is evidence that the subject S, in (35a), and A, in (35b) controls coreference with the zero subject S/A of an immediately conjoined clause.

- (35) a. OBL Si-V
Ye'wö weetadawaakojodü mödö,
 i-de'wö ^-w-etadawaakajo-dü mödö
 3-on 1S-INTR-work-IPFV 3IN:MD
 (A_i) O V O
 \emptyset *kawai ekauwüdü, inchonkomo'kö kawaichü.*
 kawai \emptyset -ekauwü-dü inchomo=komo-'kö kawai-chü
 tobacco 3O-flatten-NZR old=PL-DIM tobacco-POS
 ‘I am working on it, [I’m] cooking tobacco, the old men's tobacco.’
 {DescTab.002-3}
- b. V A_i co-predicate V (A_i)
Ajöichü chöuwönñe, ti'yeju'jö tüdüdü \emptyset
 \emptyset -ajöi-dü i-uwö-nñe ti'yeju'jö t-üdü-dü
 3O-grab-IPFV 3-ERG-PL upside.down 3O-put-IPFV
 ‘They grabbed her and put her upside down.’ {CtoYude.061: Mnl}

Without a corpus of spontaneous speech, it would have been possible to elicit examples to support the syntactic reanalysis shown in this section but to further support it, it is necessary to look at the range of uses of the construction. This range is shown in the next section.

5. Distribution of main clause constructions with *-dü*

This paper considers imperfective aspect as being subdivided in various categories (Comrie 1976: 25). To identify the relevant sub-categories of

the imperfective in Ye'kwana and classify examples into these categories, the first cue that was considered was the translation. Yet, aware that the translation in the corpus used is missing a lot of aspectual nuances, it was also necessary to take into account the discursive and pragmatic contexts. Here, fine aspectual (and other semantic or pragmatic) distinctions which in Ye'kwana do not correspond to a mono-functional morpheme and have no distinctive translation into Spanish are identified by showing they occur in their own distinctive contexts. Table 5 shows the classification of all verbal examples (excluding imperfective copulas and auxiliaries) into different aspectual sub-categories from most represented to least represented, with two a priori unfitting categories for a main clause imperfective construction separated by a dotted line.

SUBCATEGORY	COUNT	
procedural	108	32%
past imperfective	46	14%
gnomic	45	13%
present	42	12%
habitual	19	6%
progressive	18	5%
immediate/imminent	7	2%
irrealis	4	1%
present perfect	3	1%
past perfect	44	13%
semantically subordinate	2	1%
TOTAL	338	

Table 5. Verbal imperfective main clauses

This section provides examples relevant for this semantic classification, establishing a link between these categories, text genres and certain functions and morphosyntactic characteristics. Section 5.1 discusses the expression of the A argument, section 5.2 illustrates the major aspectual functions and their distribution among text genres while section 5.3 discusses further developments of the imperfective.

5.1. Different types of semantic A arguments

Only 15 examples (of 192 transitive imperfective constructions) have a clearly identifiable SAP A argument and, as mentioned in section 4.1.2, no

SAPs were overtly expressed in the imperfective construction (all overt A were third person). It follows that, most transitive examples in the corpus refer to a third person A. However, the identity of the A is not always specific, and some examples correspond to a passive-like indefinite subject reading. Basically, the absence of the ergative A has two interpretations: (i) anaphoric, where the identity of A is obvious, so does not need to be mentioned, as in (36a) for second and (36b) third person; (ii) indefinite, where the identity of A is irrelevant, which gives it the passive-like reading, as in (37a-b).

- (36) a. *Tijattö* *yeichü* *ma'janne,* *aakene,*
 tija-ttö i-w-ei-dü m-a'ja-aanö=de aakene
 make.laugh-AZR 3S-INTR-COP-IPFV 2S-AUX-RPI=INTS after.all
sotto *chijadiükomo* *mödö.*
 sotto i-tija-dü=komo mödö
 person 3O-make.laugh-IPFV=PL 3IN:MD
 ‘You were funny, [you] made people laugh.’ {CtoCania.027}
- b. *Yeichü* *enwajoodükomo* *yaawö.*
 i-w-ei-dü Ø-enwa-joo-dü=komo yaawö
 3S-INTR-COP-IPFV 3O-make.dance-CAUS-NZR=PL then
 ‘[The jaguar] always made them dance the same.’ {CtoTigMor.025: Mnl}
- (37) a. *¿Ne'kotojo* *mö'dö* *Ø-owanoma-dü?*
 what.for 3IN:MD 3O-teach-IPFV
 ‘Why [should we/anyone] teach her?’ {ConvChur.075}
- b. *Inña* *mödö* *yuduwa* *Ø-ei-dü* *yaawö*
 there 3IN:MD tree.SP 3O-get-IPFV then
 ‘That yuduwa is gotten there [by us/them/anyone].’ {DescPared.041}

As shown in the next section, the indefinite subject is tied mostly to the procedural use of the imperfective.

5.2. Subcategories of the imperfective covered by the new construction

The first encounter with this construction in Ye'kwana was in the context of an immediate event: often times, as I left the Ye'kwana center at the end of the day, one of the women in the patio would ask *¿öttödü ka mödö?* ‘are you leaving?’. This imminent event use is one of the least frequent in texts (2%), always includes the particle *mödö* and was translated with the

progressive into Spanish, as in (38a). These were identified as a separate category from true events in progress (5% of uses) such as (38b).

- (38) a. *Chö'na küwö'düdü mödö yaawö.*
 i-tö'na k-w-ö'dü-dü mödö yaawö
 3-against 1+2S-INTR-arrive-IPFV 3IN:MD Then
 ‘We're getting to that [point in the story]’ {CtoKms.278}
- b. *Ø-akoicha-jo-dü=jenñemma mödö eduwa.*
 3O-finish-CAUS-IPFV=maybe 3IN:MD now
 ‘Maybe we are now making it disappear.’ {ConvChurB.479}

Unlike what Sapién (2017) found for Kari'nja, speakers did not use this construction for descriptions of ongoing events in responses to a stimulus but used instead a different dedicated construction (*cf.* Jiménez Velázquez [2019: 119] on the progressive construction).

On the other hand, examples which were translated with the present in Spanish express either (i) an action which needs to be taken for preparing or building something, (ii) an action which is characteristic of, universally associated with, or common knowledge about a specific activity or entity, (iii) a habitual event or (iv) a current activity.

The first type of examples I labelled procedural and these occurred in mass in three of the four procedural texts included in the corpus. In these texts, most speakers described an activity that they were in the midst of doing to explain the steps which lead to the completion of an object or activity (the roof of a hut, the walls of a latrine, preparing tobacco and hunting with dogs). Procedural examples have a generic A argument translated with the reflexive pronoun into Spanish but also as first person plural or second person on occasion, as in (39a-b), even though no specific SAP is identifiable from the context.

- (39) a. *Awa'deene akötödü yaawö jojudu a'töi.*
 awa'de:-ne Ø-akötö-dü yaawö jojudu a'töi
 first-INTS 3O-cut-IPFV then wall chair:POS
 'First you (generic) cut the support for the wall.' {DescPared.007}
- b. *Yootonno jeene yaawö sooko'nödü yaawö.*
 yootonno jeene yaawö Ø-sooko'nö-dü yaawö
 after INTS then 3O-make.mud-IPFV then
 'Then you (generic) make the mud.' {DescPared.011}

The second type of examples are those I categorized in the gnomic use (13%) as shown in (40a-b). However, more than half of these were accompanied by a copula (*cf.* 5.3.2) and might be developing into a new construction.

- (40) a. *Kawadi tawe'da-to-'kö w-eeka'tiimüdü mma=ane.*
 deer short-NZR-DIM INTR-run-IPFV EXCL-INTS
 'The deer runs short (it gets tired quickly).' {CtoVenMor.029}
- b. *¿Ö'waasa'kö kasudiina w-atame-dü na'kwai?*
 how.much gas INTR-run.out-IPFV water:PERL
 'How much gas is spent (*lit.* ends) by river?' {ConvChur.087:Jdk}

The habitual (41a) and present (41b) uses translated with the Spanish present occurred the most in conversations (38 tokens), while 18 examples (roughly a third) occurred with the innovative copular auxiliary shown in section 5.3.2.

- (41) a. *Jenadöödö i'chödükomo, jenadö kojjai.*
 jenadöödö i-w-ütö(mö)-dü=komo jenadö kojjai
 early 3S-INTR-ir-IPFV=PL before at.night
 'They leave early, before, at night.' {ConvChurB.299}
- b. *Nosaje yöönedü.*
 nosaje i-w-ööne-dü
 dirty 3S-INTR-DTR:see-IPFV
 'It looks dirty.' {ConvWHO.003:Isi}

When telling a story that takes place in the past, the construction with *-dü* can still translate as a progressive but now understood as taking place in the past (42a). However, other examples in the past which were translated with a progressive referred instead to a situation which unfolds in a more extended time frame than the time during which the story is taking place (42b).

- (42) a. *Yööje i'chödükomo*
 yööje i-tö(mö)-dü=komo
 thus 3S-go-IPFV=PL
 'That way they were going.' {ConvChurB.303}
- b. *¿Wade'data ju'jö u'jötüdü yaawö?*
 wade'data ju'jö-Ø Ø-utu-jötü-dü yaawö
 sloth head-POS 3O-give-PLAC-IPFV then
 '[Was he] already giving her sloth heads?' {CtoWoshi.156}

Other examples translated with the past imperfective also describe an event within a time frame that is extended without being habitual or progressive as in (43). These represent 14% of examples and were simply labelled “past imperfective” uses.

- (43) *Yanwaakomo ajöijötüdükomo yaawö*
 yanwa=komo Ø-ajöi-jötü-dü=komo yaawö
 man=PL 3O-grab-PLAC-IPFV=PL then
 'We would grab the men.' {HistAna.110}

Finally, in almost a quarter of the imperfective examples, the verbal form is a copula, functioning either as a copula (84 occurrences) or as an auxiliary to three of the five existing auxiliarized constructions (19 occurrences). These forms cover the same functions as a Set I copula, have the same range of semantic interpretations as other imperfective verbs and the same morphosyntactic restrictions for S as other intransitive verbs. Example (44) illustrates the copula function.

- (44) *Ajo'jo yeichü mödö.*
 ajo'jo i-w-ei-dü mödö
 big 3S-INTR-COP-IPFV 3IN:MD
 'It is big' {CtoMdwk.209}

The copular form is also attested as the auxiliary of the negative (45a), the desiderative (45b) and the durative constructions (45c). It presumably could also occur as the auxiliary of the capacitative construction but might be semantically redundant to occur in the progressive construction.

- (45) a. *Önnüjötü'da* *yeichü.*
 ön-üdü-jötü-'da i-w-ei-dü
 3O:NEG-do-PLAC-NEG 3A-INTR-AUX-IPFV
 'He wasn't doing anything.' {DescTab.250}
- b. *Öyönö'se* *yeichü* *mödö* *yaawö.*
 öy-önöö-'se i-w-ei-dü mödö yaawö
 2O-eat.meat-DESID 3A-INTR-COP-IPFV 3IN:MD then
 'He wants to eat you.' {CtoMnwn.158}
- c. *Tünekammajö'e* *aweichüjünü* *mödö* *amödö.*
 tün-ekamma-jötü-e a-w-ei-dü-jünü mödö amödö
 DUR-contar-PLAC-DUR 2A-INTR-AUX-IPFV-NEG 3IN:MD 2SG
 'You do not tell them.' {ConvChur.358}

In addition to the semantic subcategories shown in this section, the imperfective construction has developed one further function and an additional formal specificity, presented in the next section.

5.3. Further developments

5.3.1. Extensions of the imperfective in narratives

There are 42 examples in the corpus which were translated with a perfective past in Spanish. These are a priori incompatible with an imperfective analysis but close inspection of the discourse context of these examples reveals that they only occurred in narrative contexts, at crucial or negative points of the narratives and never in a string of more than two constructions marked with *-dü*. Example (46) illustrates this use (as well as [35b]).

- (46) “*Aiju'kö* *i'saakö*” *künaijukui* *adödü.*
 Ø-aijuku-kö Ø-i'sha-kö kün-aijuku-i Ø-adö-dü
 3O-kill-IMP 3O-peel-IMP 3/3:DIS-kill-RPP 3O-take-IPFV
 “‘Kill it and skin it’ and he killed it and took it.” {CtoWoshi.078}

Syntactically, contrary to other uses shown so far, in the examples translated with the Spanish past perfective (i) the etymological subject *mödö* was never present, (ii) the innovative auxiliary (*cf.* 5.3.2) was never present either, and (iii) all the transitive examples had a third person A which was never generic. Additionally, all but one of the examples in which there was an overtly expressed A, occurred in this context.

Thus, this population of examples occurs in a very specific context and is formally more homogenous than the rest of the subsets of constructions identified as imperfective. The question is now whether these are a subset which is related to the imperfective examples or a separate innovation.

Considering the possible functions expressed in this past context, how likely is it that there is a mirativity component as Sapién (2017: 222) proposes for the cognate construction in Kari'nja?

For the mirative interpretation, it has been suggested that this category is more about new information to the speaker than about surprise (Bergqvist & Kittilä 2020: 2). In this respect, in a narrative, it is difficult to imagine that the events described by the storyteller are being signaled as new knowledge; if it were a mirative, it would make more sense if the form was used by the listener. There were three instances in which this use translated as past was uttered in a question by the listener. These occurred once in three different recording sessions with two different pairs of narrator-listener (*i.e.* it is not tied to personal style). In one occurrence (not shown), the answer contained the same form as the question but in another occurrence (47) the same narrator (B:) confirmed the event using a Set I form and a *-dü* form for the connected event (the third answer was only “yes”). Given that the answer contains the same form, it also seems difficult to argue that in these exchanges the motivation is to present the event as surprising.

- (47) A. *¿Ajichotojaato w-ööma-dü?*
 young.woman INTR-die-IPFV
 ‘Did the young woman die?’ {CtoKms.501}
- B. *Aji'chotojaato kün-ööma-i yaawö, Ø-aijuku-du mmaja*
 young.woman 3S:DIS-die-RPP then 3O-hit-IPFV =again
 ‘The young woman died, he also hit her (killed with a blow).’ {CtoKms.502}

Other ideas for a possible function came to mind from special uses of past forms in two different varieties of Spanish that are familiar to the author. In a variety spoken at La Paz (Bolivia), speakers use the pretérito pluscuamperfecto with an evidential value or to indicate previously unknown knowledge (Callisaya Apaza 2012: 307). In a variety spoken in Caracas, speakers use the pretérito perfecto to add “great emotive force to

an action completed in the past” (Bentivoglio & Sedano [1992] cited by Gutiérrez Araus [2001]).

Concerning an evidential value of *-dii* main clauses in narrative contexts, it can be argued that, given that most examples of this subset alternate in texts with Set I past examples in the narratives as in (46b) and (47), it does not make sense that the narrator has more evidence for some events than others.

On the other hand, the possibility of an emphatic/emotive function seems more likely. At least three examples with the imperfective, in addition to seven other examples without it, suggest the construction has a partner in crime. In these, the etymological infinitive nominalization *-nö* (limited to intransitive verbs and presenting no inflection) is also translated as past, as in (48).

- (48) *Emjüdü,* *we'tojinñajö'nö,* *a'ke* *wönküdü-nö.*
 Ø-emjü-**dü** w-eetojinñä-jötü-**nö** a'ke w-önküdü-**nö**
 3O-put.in.eye-IPFV INTR-roll.around-PLAC-INF nothing INTR-turn.around-INF
 ‘[The spicy soup] hurt him in the eye, he rolled around, he turned around for nothing.’
 {CtoTapMor.069: Mnl}

It might be that these two former nominalized forms (with *-dii* and *-nö*) share the same communicative function in narrative contexts but a study of constructions with the etymological infinitive has not yet been carried out. Ultimately, the contrast between the structure of Set I forms and these etymologically nominalized forms, appears as a good candidate for an emphatic function.

A parallel but reversed situation has been observed in Akawaio where Set I is used for “dramatic emphasis” at climatic moments in stories (Gildea & Caesar-Fox 2004ms: 25) in a system where most of main clauses are Set II. Outside of Cariban, DeLancey (2011: 351) reports that in Proto-Kuki-Chin, an etymologically nominalized constructions is used instead of the ordinary finite construction for some marked purpose. Further studies are needed to determine the exact communicative function of this subset in Ye'kwana and explore whether similar extensions are typologically associated with imperfective markers (*e.g.* the use of

aspectual forms and particles to serve evidential functions are reported as commonly noted [Bergqvist and Kittilä 2020: 5]).

5.3.2. Uses with an innovative auxiliary

Section 3.2 on non-verbal predication, showed that bare nominals in Ye'kwana cannot function as copula complements. In the corpus, however, there are 61 clauses classified as imperfective (14% of 441) in which the verb marked with the imperfective *-dii* is followed by a copular form, as shown in (49a-c).

- (49) a. *Mödöje wö'düdü wöönene, jinñamo uwööwü.*
 mödöje Ø-w-ö'dü-dü w-öönene jinñamo =uwö ewü
 thus 1S-INTR-say-IPFV 1S-AUX:HAB wife =DAT 1SG
 'Like that I say to my wife.' {ConvChurB.241}
- b. *Iye aka yoomomüdü na denña mö'dö jakiya.*
 iye =aka i-w-oomomü-dü n-a de'a mö'dö jakiya
 stick =in 3S-INTR-enter-IPFV 3S-AUX:NPST REIT 3AN:INV peccary
 'The peccary does enter in a tree trunk.' {DescCaz.102}
- c. *Yööje, yawaanadü yeichü.*
 yööje i-w-awaana-dü i-w-ei-dü
 thus 3S-INTR-reach.morning-IPFV 3S-INTR-AUX-IPFV
 'Thus [having started working], he always reached morning' {ConvChurB.305}

Given that nonverbal clauses with a copula etymologically cannot take a nominal complement (*cf.* 3.2.2), this subset can only be viewed as a further innovation. In over two thirds of these examples (44 occurrences) the copula is in the habitual form (49a) or the non-past form (49b)¹². In all of these, the clause refers to an action that is presumably always carried out in the same way. Indeed most of this clauses I had coded as gnomic or habitual uses.

It is also noteworthy that the auxiliary is marked most of the time for third person even when the S or the O are SAP as in (50a), but it has also started to agree with the S, as in (49a) above, and the A as in (50b) below.

¹² Of the remaining examples, nine occur with an etymologically nominalized form, four occur with one of three past forms, two occur with a subordinate copula, and one with the capacitative copula.

- (50) a. *Mödöjemmödö wö'düdü naawü.*
 mödöje=mmödö Ø-w-ö'dü-dü n-a ewü
 thus=INTS 1S-INTR-say-IPFV 3?-COP:NPST 1SG
 'I say exactly like that.' {ConvChur.177: Jdk}
- b. *Yoodü möönene, wade'data ontu'da möönene.*
 ^-yo-dü m-öönene wade'data ön-utu-'da m-öönene
 1O-meat.starve-IPFV 2A-AUX:HAB sloth 3O:NEG-give-NEG 2A-AUX:HAB
 'You never gave me game, you never gave me sloth.' {CtoWoshi.103}

Gildea (personal communication) suggested introducing an auxiliary in the construction, would be correlated with allowing the construction to mark tense in addition to aspect, but given the TAM inflections found so far on the auxiliary, this is an unlikely pragmatic source. Another possible pragmatic source regarding evidentiality or speaker involvement does not seem obvious in the corpus, but given the distinction has been claimed to be a feature of a cognate construction in Makushi (Abbott 1991: 106), further investigations in this sense would be worthwhile.

6. Conclusion

Having demonstrated the main clause status of a significant number of examples containing an etymological deverbal nominalization, this paper showed the prevalence of an innovative ergative imperfective construction throughout Ye'kwana discourse. Prior to a corpus study of the language, this innovative main clause use had been missed. By classifying each use of the etymological action nominalizer according to its syntactic and pragmatic function within its discursive context (instead of its morphological source function), it was also possible to show that the aspectual value of this construction covers many subcategories of the imperfective and that some uses were more frequent in certain genres. With this general picture in mind, it is now possible to propose a pathway of semantic expansion. The construction begins in the context of immediate perception of an event that is taking place in front of the speaker (38a). It then extends to events that are taking place at the time of speech and that can refer to the speaker's immediate actions (Progressive use [38b]). From there, the construction goes in two directions: (i) it starts getting used to describe events that occur with certain regularity and thus have the potential of materializing as immediate actions at any point in

time, either because they are Habitual (41a), part of a regular procedure (Procedural [39a-b]), or, the expected behavior of things and beings (Gnomic [40a-b]); then, it extends to events that were in progress (or habitual) in the past (42a-b); and (ii) it gets used for contrast in the expression of climatic events in narratives (46).

Assuming immediacy as the semantic source provides the pragmatic motivation for the scarcity of reference to the A argument in transitive clauses: when a construction is used for immediate events, it is always clear from context which are the participants of the event. Furthermore, for uses where anyone could take the agentive role such as the procedural uses, there is no specific A to refer to. On the other hand, for events in the past or habitual or gnomic events, the context might not always be enough to identify the non-indexed participant which favors the use or development of a strategy permitting disambiguation (overt expression of the A in a postpositional phrase in the past and introduction of an auxiliary in habitual or gnomic pragmatic contexts).

Immediacy as the semantic source for the new main clause also provides motivation for having innovated yet another imperfective construction (in addition to the two past imperfectives and the durative and progressive constructions). Unlike languages in the family which have replaced most original finite inflections with ergative constructions from different etymological nominalizations, Ye'kwana still has a range of Set I distinctions which are widely used. Although, as in most of the family, other innovations have entered the TAM system (*i.e.* the durative and progressive constructions), only one ergative innovation made it to main clauses. It is of typological interest that this ergative split has spread in main clause grammar through the imperfective aspect and not as a perfect or a past, even though such other potential exists (other Cariban languages have perfects and pasts based on other verbal nominalizations which are used in subordinate clauses in Ye'kwana).

Ye'kwana and other languages in the family are probably hiding further typologically interesting treasures below the morphological surface which might not be discoverable unless we encourage corpus-based descriptions. For those languages with little discourse data, the possibility of ever

finding such treasures might be lost if modern linguistic documentation work is not carried out soon.

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Abbreviations

^	lengthening of the first syllable	INSTR	instrumental
1	1st person	INTER	interrogative
2	2nd person	INTR	intransitive
3	3rd person	INTS	intensifier
1+2	inclusive	INV	invisible
1+3	exclusive	IPFV	imperfective
A	most agent like argument	IRR	irrealis
ADV	adverb	MD	medial
AN	animate	NEG	negative
ANT	anterior	NPST	nonpast
AZR	adverbializer	NZR	nominalizer
CAUS	causative	O	most patient like argument
CIRC	circumstantial	OBL	oblique
CF	co-referential	PERL	perlative
CONTR	contrastive	PL	plural
COP	copula	PLAC	pluractional
CVB	converb	POS	possessed
DAT	dative	PP	postposition
DESID	desiderative	PRED	predicate
DETR	detransitive	PROP	propriative
DIM	diminutive	PSR	possessor
DIS	distant	PST	past
DPI	distant past imperfective	PTCP	participle
DPP	distant past perfective	PX	proximate
EMPH	emphatic	QUOT	quotative
ERG	ergative	RECTIF	rectificative
ESS	essive	REIT	reiterative
EXCL	exclusive	RPI	recent past imperfective
EXIST	existential	RPP	recent past perfective
FRUST	frustrative	S	single argument of intransitive verb
HAB	habitual	SAP	speech act participant
IMP	imperative	SG	singular
IN	inanimate	SP	species
INF	infinitive	SUBJ	subject

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