DESIDERATIVE VERB SEQUENCES IN UCHUMATAQU

Katja Hannß

The present paper is concerned with desiderative verb sequences in Uchumataqu. Other types of verb sequences, such as Secondary-B concepts, verb sequences where the minor member comes from a semantic class other than desiderative, and nominalised object arguments, are discussed. These are compared to the desiderative constructions.

1 Introduction

In what follows, I will first present an overview of the geographic and demographic situation as well as of the language itself before proceeding to a brief discussion of the theoretical background in section 2. I will argue that desiderative verb sequences are reminiscent of serial verb construction (henceforth SVC) but cannot be called SVC themselves. In section 3.1, I will present the desiderative verb sequences in greater detail, before I turn to a description of Secondary-B concepts in 3.2. In 3.3, Uchumataqu verb sequences will be presented, where V2 is a cognition verb. Furthermore, some instances will be described that are possibly due to Spanish influence. In section 3.4, nominalised object arguments will briefly be discussed. The article concludes with a summary of my findings in section 4.

1.1 Geographic and demographic situation

Uchumataqu was spoken mainly in the village of Irohito at the southeastern shore of Lake Titicaca in Bolivia. The region the Uru² inhabited is very much shaped by Lake Titicaca and the Río Desaguadero (south

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1 Part of the findings to be presented in the following are taken from the author’s dissertation, which was funded by the Spinoza programme ‘Lexicon and Syntax’. During the PhD project, archive studies were carried out in Berlin (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, IAI) and La Paz (Museo de Etnologia y Folklore, MUSEF). Fieldwork in Irohito took place in February 2006, where the author stayed with Don Lorenzo Inda, who was also the main language consultant, next to Don Cirico Inda.

2 While the language is called Uchumataqu, the speakers are referred to as the Uru.
of Lake Titicaca) and accordingly, the traditional lifestyle of the Uru revolved around the lake. In former times, the Uru were hunters and gatherers and lived off fish, waterfowl, and aquatic plants, a lifestyle for which they were despised by their Aymara and Quechua speaking neighbours. This attitude, which lasted until only recently, led in colonial times to the Spanish policy of re-settling, the so-called reducciones. The policy of re-settling was largely successful and by the late 18th century only some small and isolated Uru speaking communities remained.

One of these was the village of Irohito, where an Uchumataqu speaking population existed until around 1950. However, the number of inhabitants was always small and probably never exceeded 100 (Muysken and Hannß 2006: 215). The social and economic pressure exerted by the surrounding Aymara population was great, the number of bilingual Uchumataqu-Aymara speakers was likewise high and Uchumataqu was thus in an unfavourable position. These factors led to a decreasing number of speakers and a severe drought in the first half of the 1940’s finally meant the end to Uchumataqu as the language of daily communication.

Despite this, some rememberers of Uchumataqu remained and in 2001 and 2002, Pieter Muysken made recordings in Irohito and published a short text (2001) and an extensive word list (2005). The latest research on Uchumataqu is a description of the language based on archive material and previous studies (Hannß 2008). However, after the last native speaker died in 2004, no further research was possible. The language of Irohito today is Aymara and to an increasing degree Spanish.

1.2 Database and conventions

The Uchumataqu language was documented between 1894 and 1952 and these studies provide the main database for the present paper. It has to be noted, however, that these studies are highly divergent with respect to the linguistic data they contain as well as with respect to the way the data were collected. Most of the studies are ‘mere’ word lists, some

3 By these reducciones the Uru were forced to live among an Aymara and Quechua speaking population and to adopt their language and culture.

4 His main language consultant was Julia Vila who had passed away in 2004. She was probably the last native speaker.