

On rare typological features of the Zamucoan languages, in the framework of the Chaco linguistic area

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The Zamucoan family only includes two surviving endangered languages: Ayoreo (**AY**) and Chamacoco (**CH**), spoken in northern Chaco between Bolivia and Paraguay by approximately 4500 and 2000 people, respectively. The Zamucoan family also includes an extinct language, Ancient Zamuco (**AZ**), described in the 18th century by the Jesuit Father Ignace Chomé. AZ is very close to AY from the lexical point of view, but shows striking morphosyntactic correspondences with CH; this allows robust diachronic insights (Ciucci 2013; Ciucci & Bertinetto, submitted).

This talk will address typological features which turn out to be rarely attested in the world's languages (cf. the Konstanz *Raritätenkabinett*). Some of these rarities can be observed in both AY and CH and probably stem from Proto-Zamuco. Among these one can mention: (1) the tripartite distinction within nominal morphology, crucially involving one form characteristically devoted to nominal predication plus two forms for nominals in argumental position with specific vs unspecific reference; (2) the radical lack of tense and aspect in verb morphology (Bertinetto 2014); (3) the presence of both gender and classifiers, or more specifically of gender and number in possessive classifiers (Bertinetto & Ciucci, in preparation); (4) the so-called para-hypotactic strategy, involving the simultaneous presence of both coordinating and subordinating connectives in sentences including a proleptic dependent clause (Bertinetto & Ciucci 2012). Other typological rarities, although equally inherited from Proto-Zamuco, are only found in AZ and occasionally in AY: (5) the presence of nominal tense (AZ) and of nominal aspect (AZ, AY) – the latter being an absolute typological rarity – and (6) the traces of a conjunct/disjunct system (AZ). The diachronic reconstruction proposed by Ciucci & Bertinetto (submitted) reveals other rarities stemming from relatively recent developments in the verb morphology of individual languages, such as: (7) the first person zero marking in the AY *realis* mood; (8) the unexpected affix order in the CH third person plural (Bertinetto 2012); (9) the combination of greater plural and clusivity in CH (Ciucci 2013).

According to some scholars, Gran Chaco constitutes a linguistic area (Comrie *et al.* 2010). Indeed, some of the above-mentioned features may also be found in other surrounding languages: in particular (4) and (8), and to some extent (3). As a matter of fact, the Chaco populations, although traditionally in mutual conflict, were in narrow contact for centuries, so that lexical and morphological borrowings could occur. In at least one case (8), one can prove that the Zamucoan languages were the source of the influence (Ciucci, to appear).

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