Indeterminate valency and verbal ambivalence in Chitimacha

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1. Valency

- long history, but few crosslinguistic surveys (Dixon & Aikhenvald 2000; Kulikov, Malchukov, & de Swart 2006; Malchukov & Comrie 2015; Tsunoda & Kageyama 2006)

- minority but persistent concern: Are valency classes a concept equally applicable to all languages?

- Possible exceptions: Creek (Martin 2000), Mohawk (Mithun 2006), Balinese (Shibatani & Artawa 2015), Sri Lanka Malay (Nordhoff 2015), Abawiri (Yoder 2016).

2. Valency in Chitimacha

- Language isolate spoken in Louisiana until 1940

- Texts recorded by Morris Swadesh from speakers Chief Benjamin Paul and Mrs. Delphine Ducloux between 1930 and 1934

How does one determine valency classes in a language where there is no consistent means of deciding the number of arguments that a given verb has?

Answer: *Each of the potential morphological valency-adjusting devices in Chitimacha are not valency-adjusting per se, but rather alter the lexical semantics of the verb in ways that license and abet – but do not require – changes in valency.*

3. Overview of Chitimacha Grammar

Verbs distinguish between First and Non-First person:

First
(1) ʔam-iki
     see-1SG
     'I saw'   A65 4.20

Non-First
(2) ʔam-ʔiš-iʔi
     see-IPFV-NF.SG
     'you see'   A5 6.3

(3) ʔam-ʔiš-iʔi
     see-IPFV-NF.SG
     'she saw'   A65 2.13

Verbs show agent-patient alignment in the First person, and nominative-accusative alignment in the Non-First person (only subjects are marked):

Intransitive with Agent
(4) ʔapš   ʔe-h-iki
     back   be-LOC-1SG.A
     'I returned'   A10 5.4

Intransitive with Patient
(5) hi   ʔe-h-ki
     AND   be-LOC-1SG.P
     'it happened to me'   A70 1.6

Transitive without Patient
(6) k'et-iki
     hit/kill(SG)-1SG.A
     'I killed it'   A80 5.6

Transitive with Patient
(7) k'et-ki-ʔi
     hit/kill(SG)-1SG.P-NF.SG
     'she beat me'   A60 1.6

Verbs do not index their syntactic object, only the subject:

(8) he:čpi-ču-k
     help-IRR-1SG.A
     'I'll help you'   A1 2.7

(9) siksi   k'e-ču:-š
     eagle   kill(SG)-IRR-COND
     'if one kills an eagle'   A1 4.2

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(10) *hus tep c'ismam ʔuka:ši*

hus	tep	c'ismam	ʔuka-ʔiš-i
his	fire	piece	count-IPFV-NF.SG

'he counted his pieces of fire' A5 1.6

Any argument may be omitted if marked on the verb or understood from context:

(11)

Wetk	kunuk'u	we	panš	hi	šam-tk-š	t'ut-naʔa.
then	QUOT	DET	people	AND	go.out-PTCP-SBD	go(PL)-NF.PL

ʔašinč'at'a	kunšin	hani	ʔašinč'ata=nki	hi	tup-t-naʔa.
old	some	house	old=LOC	DIST	find-TR-NF.PL

Panš	hiš	k'et-k	ʔo:š	hup	hi	hokšte-pa,	ʔo:š
people	ERG	kill(SG)-PTCP	buzzard	to	AND	feed-SBD	buzzard

hepši=nk	kap	mesti-:k'	či-ʔuy-i.	Tutk
excrement=ABL	STAT	be.white-PTCP	COP(VERT)-IPFV-NF.SG	then

wey-š	kin	ʔapš	ne:č'i-mi-naka.
DEM=TOP	with	RECIP	speak-PLACT-1PL.A

'The people got out and went on. They found an old man at an old house.
He was all white with buzzard excrement, because some people had killed
him and left him to the buzzards. We spoke with him.' A3 4.1 – 4.4

The above two facts make it difficult to determine transitivity in Chitimacha based
on local context alone (i.e., the clause). However, tracking of discourse referents (as
above), combined with a variety of transitivity-adjusting devices, resolve this
problem in almost every case:

(12)

Hi	kima-ki	k'an	[…]	ni	k'uš-m-puy-na.
DIST	believe-1SG.P	NEG		DTRZR	eat-PLACT-IPFV-NF.PL

'I do not believe they ate [in that other land].' A4 5.2

(13)

Kamčin	ʔap	šam-k'ust-i-nki	t'emi-naka.	Weyt
deer	VEN	go.out-sudden-NF.SG=TEMP	kill(PL)-1PL.A	thus

ni	k'uš-mi-:t'i-nakun.
DTRZR	eat-PLACT-IRR(PL)-1PL.A

'As the deer came out, we killed them. Thus we shall eat them.' A19 4.4

4. Transitivity-Adjusting Devices

4.1. Preverbs

A set of preverbs form a lexical unit with the verb, and affect the verb's lexical
aspect, directionality, reciprocity/reflexivity, and sometimes transitivity:

Preverb	Function(s)	Translational Equivalent
hi	ANDATIVE	'(going) to'
	DISTAL	'(going) there'
his	ANDATIVE REDITIVE (ADRETITIVE)	'(going) back to'
	REPETITIVE	'doing again'
	RESPONSIVE	'doing in response'
kap	INCEPTIVE	'starting'
	INCHOATIVE	'becoming'
	PUNCTUAL	'suddenly'
	STATIVE	'being'
	SUPER-LATIVE	'(going) up'
ka:p's	SUPER-LATIVE REDITIVE (SUPERREDITIVE)	'(going) back up'
ka	TRANSLATIVE	'across'
kas	DISLATIVE	'(going) apart'
	REVERSIVE	'reverse'
	TRANSLATIVE REDITIVE (TRANSREDITIVE)	'back across'
ni	DETRANSITIVIZER	'thing'
	IMPERATIVE	'do it!'
	NOMINALIZER	'thing'
	SUBLATIVE	'(going) down'
ʔap	PROXIMAL	'(coming) here'
	VENITIVE	'coming'
ʔapš	CIRCUMLATIVE	'randomly, about'
	PROXIMAL REDITIVE	'(coming) here'
	RECIPROCAL	'each other'
	REFLEXIVE	'oneself'
	SOCIATIVE	'together'
	(VENITIVE/SIMPLE) REDITIVE	'(coming) back'

Preverbs can license or delicense arguments to the verb:

- *hi* adds a Goal to the verbal semantics, even when that Goal is not overt or even salient in the discourse.

<u>No Goal</u>

(14) miš   k'ap-t-k,   t'ut-naka
      road   take-TR-PTCP   go(PL)-1PL.A
      'taking to the road, we went'   A4 3.1

<u>Overt Goal</u>

(15) Wetk   kunuk'u   k'ast'a=nk   hi   t'ut-naʔa.
      then   QUOT   north.wind=LOC AND   go(PL)-NF.PL
      'Then, they say, they went toward the north.'   A3 2.1

      […]

<u>Goal Added to Lexical Semantics of Verb</u>

(16) hi   t'ut-naʔa   hesik'en
      AND   go(PL)-NF.PL   again
      'they went on (to there) again'   A3 2.5

- *ʔapš* 'back, together' often adds a reflexive semantics to the verb, sometimes delicensing an argument.

(17) <u>Reduced Valency (Transitive Verb)</u>
      hus   mahči   kuh   hiš   ʔapš   neh-pa-puy-na
      his   tail   feather INSTR REFL   cover-CAUS-IPFV-NF.PL
      'they adorn themselves with his tail feathers'   A10 11.2

(18) <u>No Valency Change (Intransitive Verb)</u>
      Wetkš   we   panš pinikank ʔašinč'ata=š   ʔapš   čuy-i.
      then   DET   Indian   old=TOP   back   go(SG)-NF.SG
      'Then the old Indian came back.'   A9 4.5

(19) <u>No Valency Change (Transitive Verb)</u>
      Huyi   waytm   ʔapš   wok-t-i.
      good   more   REFL   feel-TR-NF.SG
      'He felt (himself) better.'   A86 2.21

      <u>Reflexive without Reduced Valency (Transitive Verb)</u>
      hus   nehe   ʔapš   k'et-iʔi.
      his   self   REFL   kill(SG)-NF.SG
      'He killed himself.'   A3 6.7

- Without *ʔapš*, arguments like *hus nehe* are interpreted as emphatic rather than reflexive pronouns:

      we   heki ʔatkank   hus   nehe=nk   hi   wit-mi-ču:-š
      DET   minister   his   self=NOM   AND   shoot-PLACT-IRR(SG)-COND
      'if the minister himself shot it'   A67 3.3

- The detransitivizing preverb *ni* derives from a noun originally meaning 'thing'.

<u>Transitive without *ni*</u>

(20) ʔiš=k   ʔiš   nu:p   k'as-ka-nki-š
      1SG=NOM   1SG   potato   plant-PL=TEMP=SBD
      'when I planted my potatoes'   A59 2.9

<u>Intransitive with *ni*</u>

(21) hus=k   ney   =ki   ni   k'as-t-'iš-iʔi
      3sg=NOM   ground   =LOC   DTRZR plant-TR-IPFV-NF.SG
      'he was planting in the ground'   A59 1.9

<u>*ni* does not reduce valency</u>

(22) Tutk   namu=š   hi   čuh-mi-ʔi.   Hani   ne
      then   town=TOP   DIST   build-PLACT-NF.SG   house   just

              ni   čuh-mi-ʔi.
              DTRZR build-PLACT-NF.SG

      'Then he built a town. He built houses.'   A49 1.11 – 1.12

4.2. Locational Suffixes

- *-n*   'out, on'
- *-h*   'in'
- *-k*   'at' (?)

The locational suffixes add a Ground to the lexical semantics of the verb. These suffixes are no longer productive; they are limited to a small set of verbs.

<u>No Locational Suffix</u>

(23) Weyt   pe-ʔe-nki   […]
      thus   be(HORIZ)-NF.SG-TEMP
      'while he lay thus'   A17 5.17

<u>Locational Suffix with Overt Ground</u>

(24) Wetk   napšč'a=nk   <u>kiš ʔatin</u> pe-h-k   kap   tey-i.
      then   black=NOM   horse   be(HORIZ)-on-PTCP   STAT   stay-NF.SG
      'Now a black person on a horse stopped.'   A48 3.5

Ground Added to Lexical Semantics of Verb   ('land' already activated)

(25) We   kuːk=š   k'amik'i wetk his   pe-h-w-i.
      DET water=TOP   long   then DUR   be(HORIZ)-on-moving-NF.SG
      'The water was on (the land) a long time.'   A62 2.2

(26) Šuš=up   kap pe-h-iʔi.   Hi   pe-h-i-nki
      tree=to up   be(HORIZ)-on-NF.SG   AND   be(HORIZ)-on-NF.SG=TEMP
      'He climbed a tree. When he had climbed it, […]'   A15 2.4 – 2.5

4.3. Transitive Suffix -t

The -t suffix usually increases the transitivity of the verb.

Without -t
(27) Wetk panš pinikank ʔoːnak kap   hok-naʔa.
      then Indian   all   STAT   leave-NF.PL
      'The Indians all left.'   A43 3.7

With -t
(28) kičant'i   ʔunk'unk=š   hok-t-naʔa
      old.woman   one=TOP   leave-TR-NF.PL
      'they had left only one old woman'   A36 2.8

Without -t
(29) wetk hus   hana=nki   hi   hu-h-ni-na
      then his   house=LOC AND   enclosure-in-NEUT-NF.PL
      'they entered his house'   A86 5.6

With -t
(30) Wetk we   panš   ʔiš =ki   hi   kimi-ːk'-š   na
      then DET people me   =LOC AND   believe-PTCP-SBD COP(NF.PL)

          sa   hana=nki   hi   hu-h-t-iki.
          DIST house=LOC DIST enclosure-in-TR-1SG.A

      'I have put people who believe in me in that house.'   A11 1.11

Very often -t merely adds an Undergoer to the verb's lexical semantics:

(31) Weyč'iːk'š   hiʔniš   hi   hok-t-naʔa.
      therefore   alone   DIST   leave-TR-NF.PL
      'Therefore they left (it) alone.'   A9 5.5

(32) Weyt   huk'u   ʔiː-č-t-'iš-naʔa.
       DEM   COP   turn-handling-TR-IPFV-NF.PL
       'That is the way they turn-weave.'   A73 6.3

4.4. Intransitive Suffix -(t)e

Certain verbs are derived from a noun / adjective + -(t)e INTR (which itself derives historically from teːt- 'be like, say').

(33) šuš   či:š-e-pa=nki   < ciʔiš 'leaf'
      tree   leaf-INTR-CAUS=TEMP
      'when the leaves bud'   A77 1.1

(34) kap naktaːšiʔi   < nakt 'ice'
      kap   nakt-te-ʔiš-iʔi
      STAT   ice-INTR-IPFV-NF.SG
      'it (the weather) freezes'   A45 4.12

But -te sometimes creates polyvalent verbs:

(35) Waʔa=š   ney   kin   pokti kin kap   t'ik-te-mi-ʔi.
      other=TOP earth with sky   with STAT   burst-INTR-PLACT-NF.SG
      'The earth and sky crushed the others.'   A3 9.4

(36) hak-te-ma-ːš-naʔa
      drink(?)-INTR-PLACT-IPFV-NF.PL
      'they had him drink it (the medicine)'   A3 7.2

In some cases a -te verb shows an unmarked valency alternation:

(37) wetk   šušeyi   hi   mem-ti-ːk',
      then   fence   AND   jump(?)-INTR-PTCP
      'then, jumping the fence,'   A48 3.13

(38) Wetk   we   waštik sek'is   hi   mem-t(e)-i.
      then   DET   cow   among   DIST jump(?)-INTR-NF.SG
      'Then he jumped amongst the cattle.'   A55 1.13

4.5. Pluractional Suffix -ma

Chitimacha pluractional -ma preferentially indicates plurality of the subject when the verb is intransitive, plurality of the object when the verb is transitive, or plural events generally (i.e., frequentative, distributive, or iterative meanings):

<u>Single Action, Plural Subject (Intransitive)</u>

ka:kwa-ki	k'an	ʔašt	ʔučiːk'š	panš	ne	kap	nacpik-mi-naʔa
know-1SG.P	NEG	how	doing	person	even	INCEP	begin-PLACT-NF.PL

'I do not know how people started up' (i.e. how humankind originated)   A1 4.4

<u>Single Action, Plural Object (Transitive)</u>

Wetkš	hus	naːnča:kamank=š	hi	hok-mi-iʔi.
then	his	brothers=TOP	AND	leave-PLACT-NF.SG

'He left his brothers.'   A1 1.1

<u>Plural Action, Singular Object (Transitive)</u>

wetk	ʔapš	c'it-mi-ʔi
then	about	cut-PLACT-NF.SG

'then he cut him up (stabbed him in several places)'   A48 1.10

- -ma is often the only marker of the syntactic object on the verb:

<u>Overt Object with -ma</u>

(39)
Waʔa=š	ney	kin	pokti	kin	ʔapš	neh-t-k
other=TOP	earth	with	sky	with	together	strike-TR-PTCP

kap	t'ik-te-mi-ʔi.
STAT	burst-INTR-PLACT-NF.SG

'The earth and the sky crushed the others by striking together.'   A3 9.4

<u>Undergoer Added to Lexical Semantics of Verb</u>

(40)
we	ʔašant'a	his	nuy-m-i
DET	old	response	call-PLACT-NF.SG

'the old man answered' (implied by context: 'them')   A4 3.13

4.6. Manner Suffixes

- *-kint*   'dropping, pushing'
- *-k'es*   'pouring'
- *-t'uwa / -ptk'uš*   'suddenly'
- *-či*   'handling'
- *-c*   'touching'
- *-wa*   'moving'

Some manner suffixes have no apparent effect on valency:

<u>Without Manner Suffix</u>

(41)
Hus	waši=nk	we	kimu	pek'is	ʔapš	ʔiː-m-i.
his	hand=ABS	DET	branch	over	CIRC	turn-PLACT-NF.SG

'He moved his hands over the limb.'   A9 4.3

<u>With Manner Suffix -t'uwa</u>

(42)
Wetkš	k'ast'a=nk	kas	ʔiː-t'uwi-čuː-š,
then	north.wind=LOC	back	turn-sudden-IRR(SG)-COND

'Then, if (the wind) turns to the north,"   A84 4.7

Other manner suffixes add a Patient to the verbal semantics:

<u>Without Manner Suffix (Intransitive)</u>

(43)
č'aː	kap	ša-n-i-nki
sun	up	container-out-NF.SG=TEMP

'when the sun rises'   A64 1.6

<u>With -kint 'dropping, pushing' (Transitive, Overt Object)</u>

(44)
Wetkš	we	nitiya-nk=š	ʔiš	hi	ša-n-kint-ki
then	DET	master-NOM=TOP	me	AND	container-out-drop-1SG.P

'The (boat) master put me off.'   A10 10.3

<u>With -kint 'dropping, pushing' (Transitive, No Overt Object)</u>

(45)
Tutk	kuː	=ki	hi	ni-kint-i.
then	water	=LOC	AND	water-drop-NF.SG

'He threw (it) into the water.'   A9 3.3

4.7. Other Transitivity-Adjusting Devices

- Causative *-pa*
- Benefactive *-aʔ*
- Patient Suffixes *-ki*, *-kuy* (Hieber, under revision)

5. Discussion & Conclusions

- Each transitivity-adjusting device often licenses a change in argument structure, but does not necessitate one
- The same set of transitivity-adjusting devices may result in clauses of different valency depending on the preceding discourse context.
- Participants are present in the clause when they are a continuing discourse referent.
- Valency is not strongly expressed in Chitimacha.
- The combination of transitivity-adjusting devices and information tracking resolve potential ambiguities, without the need for clearly-defined valency classes.
- Verbal morphology changes the lexical semantics of the verb, enabling but not requiring changes in valency.
- Chitimacha verbal morphology is fundamentally about event perspective and construal (transitivity) rather than argument structure (valency) *per se*.

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